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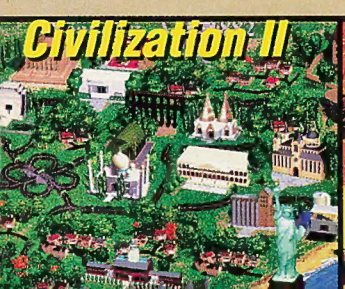

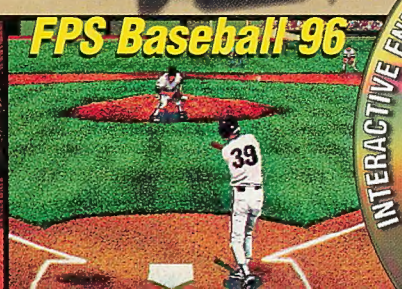

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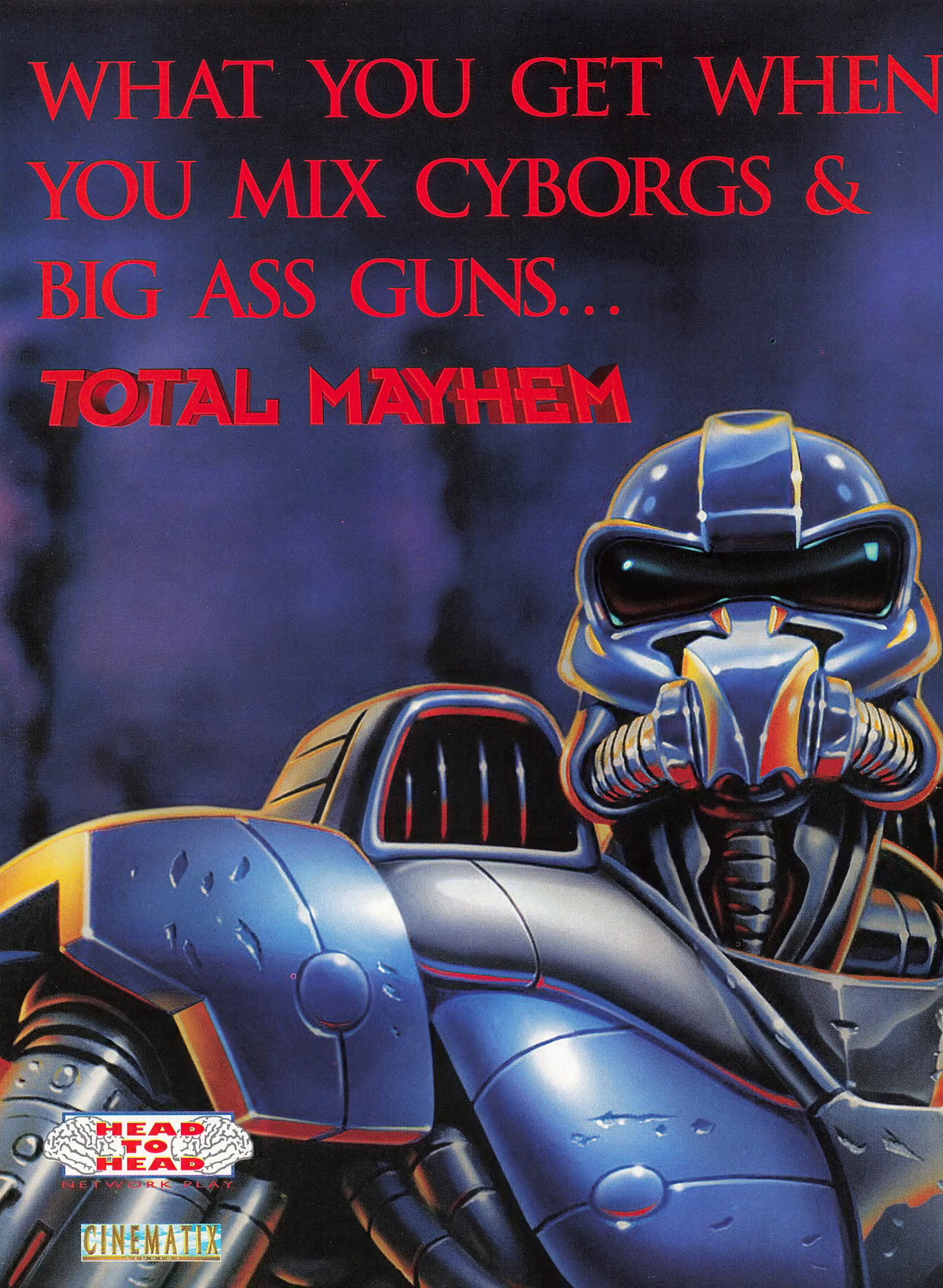
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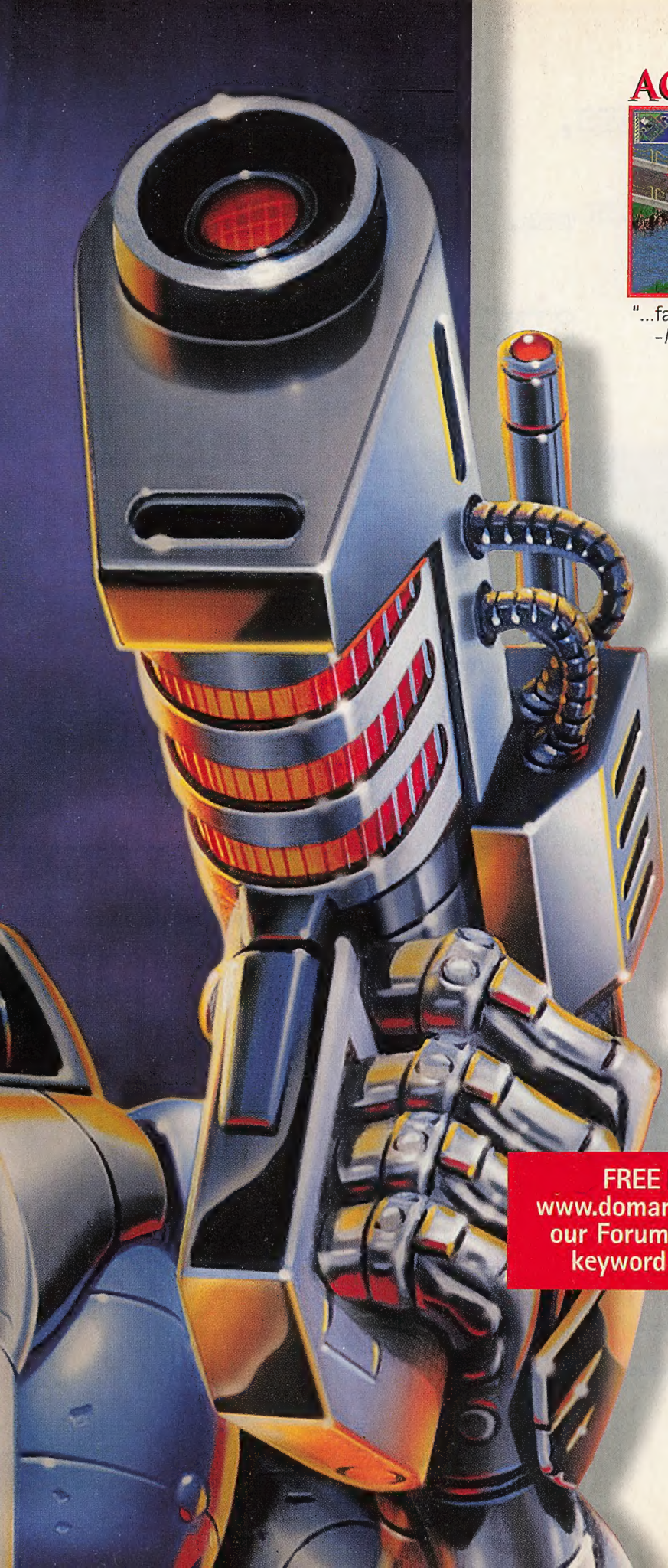

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COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

JUNE 1996

ISSUE 67

contents

news

12 Everything we could think of under extreme pressure, including stuff on Intel's new MMX Pentium, CGDC, a preview of E3 and first looks at *Prey*, *Reverence*, *Toonstruck* and *Pinball Construction Kit*

features

22 Getting ready to take to the skies again
23 AH-64D Longbow *by Ben Chiu*
28 1943: The European Air War *by Steve Wartofksy*
30 What Hath Lucas Wrought? *by Cindy Yans*
34 Interview: Jane Jensen's Rapture *by Brenda Garno*

previews

40 MissionForce: Cyberstorm *by Scott Udell*
42 Star General *by Scott Udell*
44 The Settlers II *by Scott Udell*
46 Monty Python and the Holy Grail *by Cindy Yans*

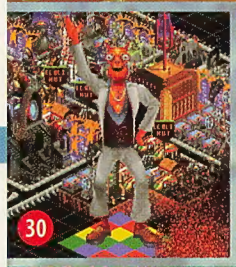
reviews

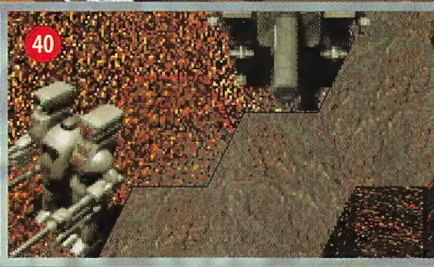
48 Game of the Month: *Sid Meier's Civilization II* is simply the best strategy game on the planet. Also check out the enclosed CD for enhanced reviews of *Fantasy General*, *Chess Tutor*, *Angel DeVoid*, *Kingdom O' Magic*, *Spycraft: The Great Game*, *Ripper*, *ATF*, *Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer II*, *Top Gun*, *Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri*, *Whiplash* and *Descent II*

strategy

56 Command Post *by M. Evan Brooks*
58 On War *by Mike Robel*
60 Allied General Tips Part II *by Mark Walker*
64 Caesar II Tips Part II *by Cindy Vanous & Eric Leaf*
68 Warcraft II Tips Part III *by Joe Grant Bell*
70 Warhammer Tips *by Samuel Brown Baker II*

COVER STORY:





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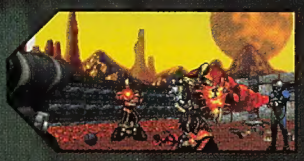

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over the net

74 SierraWeb *by Joe Grant Bell*

adventure

76 Road to Nowhere *by Cindy Yans*
78 Boots of Re *by Andy Backer*
80 Chronomaster Tips *by Andy Backer*
82 Stonekeep Tips Part II *by Andy Backer*

simulations

88 The Hangar *by Steve Wartofsky*
92 Air Combat Advisor *by Ben Chiu*
94 Wing Commander IV Tips *by Ben Chiu*
100 IndyCar Racing II Tips Part II *by Gordon Goble*

arcade

108 Hexen Tips Part II *by Samuel Brown Baker II*
110 Crusader: No Remorse Tips Part II *by Samuel Brown Baker II*

sportswire

112 FPS: Baseball Pro 96 Preview *by Steve Bauman*

etc

10 Upfront *by Steve Wartofsky*
3DOpinions
PSXtreme
SaturnScope

cd demos

Warbirds
TacOps for Windows
Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri
Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer II
America Online
Soccer 96
Return Fire
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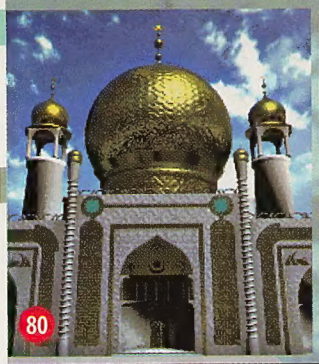

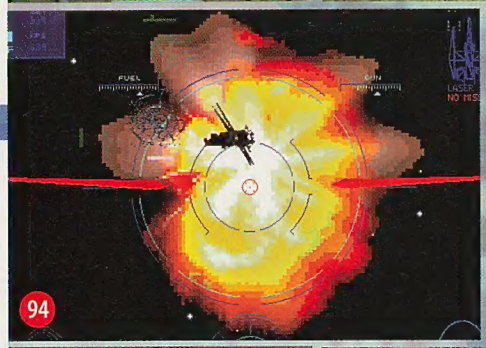

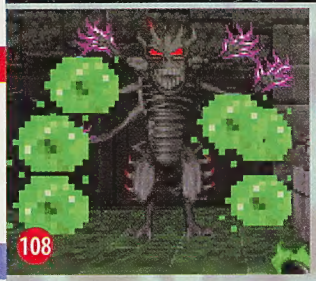

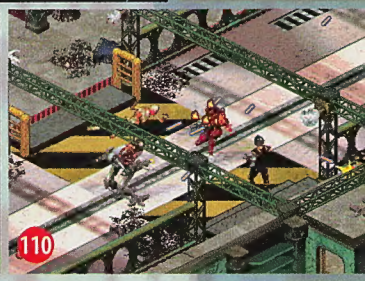

Running IE under Windows 95

Place the IE disc into your CD-ROM drive. The CD should start up and run itself. If the disc does not run, double click the "My Computer" icon, then double-click the icon for your CD drive. If at any point the installation software asks if you would like to install Video for Windows, ALWAYS CHOOSE "NO"! Windows 95 already includes all the necessary software for playing IE's digital video.

Running IE under Windows 3.1

Place the IE disc into your CD-ROM drive. In Windows Program Manager, choose "Run" from the FILE menu. Type "D:\INSTALL" (where "D:" is the letter assigned to your CD-ROM drive) and press ENTER. Follow the instructions on the screen to install IE. When finished, just double-click the IE icon to run the mag.

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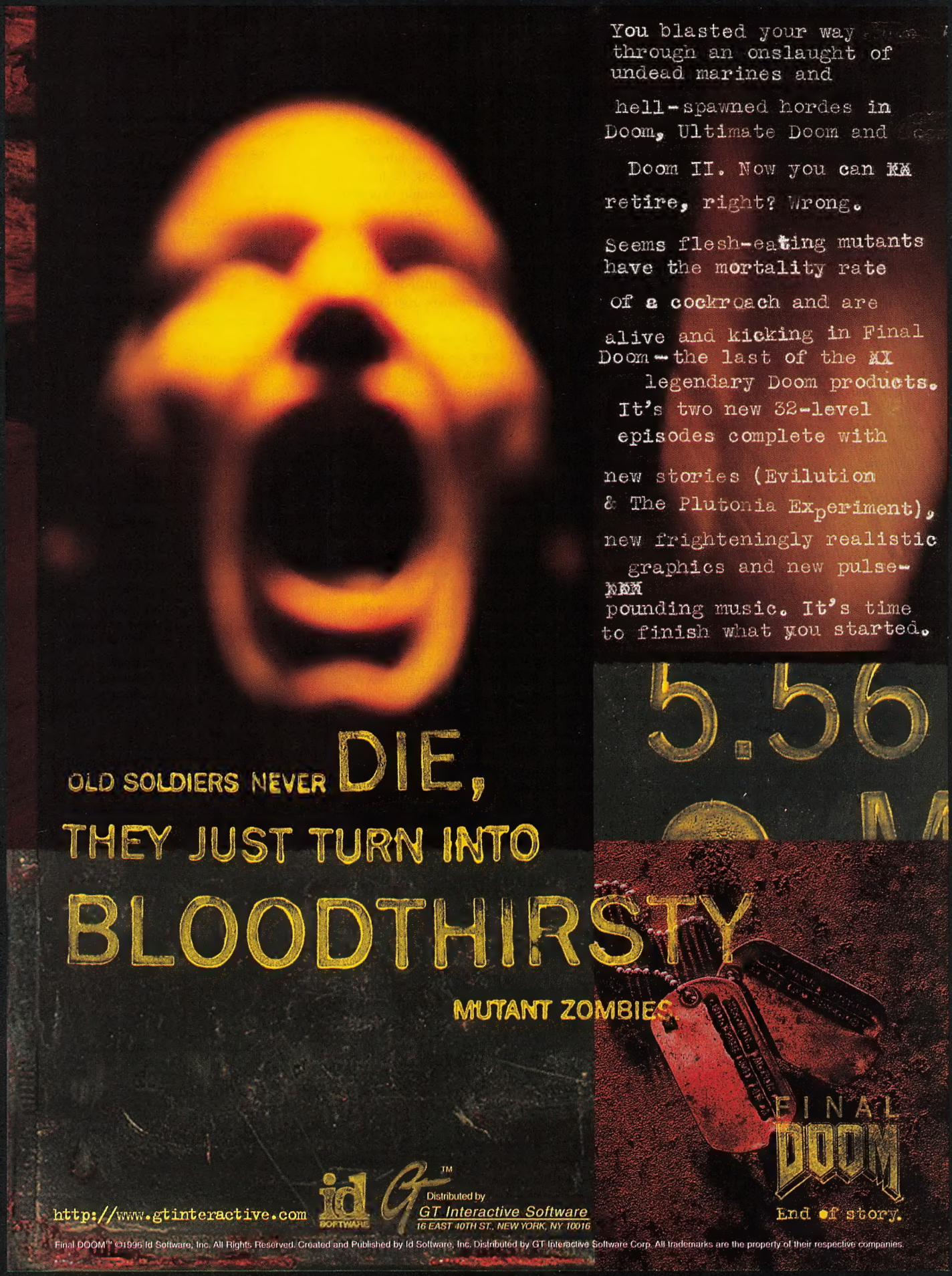
You blasted your way through an onslaught of undead marines and hell-spawned hordes in Doom, Ultimate Doom and Doom II. Now you can retire, right? Wrong.
Seems flesh-eating mutants have the mortality rate of a cockroach and are alive and kicking in Final Doom - the last of the legendary Doom products. It's two new 32-level episodes complete with new stories (Evilution & The Plutonia Experiment), new frighteningly realistic graphics and new pulse-pounding music. It's time to finish what you started.
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Put that New Age CD on and meditate

As I write this, the computer industry seems in yet another state of transition. Apple's financial hemorrhaging goes on; big acquisitions and rearrangements and mergers continue. Hardware and software announced as The Next Big Thing almost a year ago is still In Process, and surprises that nobody heard early warning about (MMX, Gateway's decision to produce a PC/TV, etc.) leave spectators wondering when the dust will settle (or whether certain corporate types are losing their minds). Game designers and publishers who heeded the call for more intelligent, in-depth games are finding their efforts minimally rewarded, while others who continue to push the "*Doom* until the 21st century" approach to game design are all too often meeting with disappointing results. From some points of view it almost seems like none of the formulae of the past continue to make sense anymore; at the same time, however, none of the alternatives tried lately seem to be lighting much of a fire, either.

Whence the loss of focus? I'd say that in some ways, the influence of the Internet has something to do with all this: the core gaming audience of 50,000-150,000 (for PC-based gaming) is mostly online, and the variety of sources of information they can find online have increased substantially in the past year. The control over the marketing and pre-release hype that used to be possible is now lost, due to the increasing ability of gamers of all sorts to communicate directly with each other about their perceptions of what's just released, what's upcoming, and the information they've gathered from elsewhere. Gamers these days seem more excited about hearing other gamers' opinions – half-formed as many of those might be – than they are about whatever information they get from sources they consider "official." Combine this direct gamer-to-gamer communication with a growing suspicion that most commercial sources of information (companies, magazines, demos, etc.) are unreliable due to their various corporate affiliations and obvious needs for self-promotion, and you've got a situation that's pretty volatile.

The perception that other players are inevitably *better* sources of information about games than can be obtained via demos or articles written for magazines can sometimes be a dangerous one, I think, because it's so seductive. The basic assumption is that GamerX is speaking from the heart when s/he praises or slams a game, and is thus to be trusted more than this or that writer or PR person on the company dole. No questioning about whether GamerX online or in the newsgroup might actually be the cyber-equivalent of an *agent provocateur*, someone seeded by some company or other in the discussion to pose as a "regular gamer" (don't gasp – it happens, and frequently).

While gamer conversations about games often *look* more valid or truthful, one thing you learn after years of watching online conversation about games is that individual gamers can be as power-mad and twisted in their strivings after insisting on the credibility and authority of their own peculiar point of view as any corporate executive insisting that PublicationX rave about GameX. In fact, despite the obvious profit motive that inevitably drives *everything* in this business, the process of decision-making that goes on at most magazines and game publishing houses – no matter how big or small, desperate and greedy for profit or eager to appear as The High Arbiters of Taste – is complex enough, and involves enough (mostly very experienced and dedicated and imaginative) people over a long enough time that its end result is much more of a reasoned, intelligent consensus than you'd find forming in any ongoing online discussion of a game. In fact, it's consistently those people in various businesses who arrogantly (and often, naïvely) insist on the validity and importance of their own individual opinion over all others' who end up losing out – at the very least, being regularly frustrated, at worst, getting shafted.

So perhaps the Internet is one reason for the loss of focus on what works in gaming right now, but perhaps the lack of experience of many of the new players in the industry is a factor as well. Many of these new players – whether in executive, marketing or design positions – have exactly that kind of naïve arrogance guaranteed to really miss the mark. It takes a long time for teams to form at all levels in a company, for people to learn to work through their conflicts with each other, towards a common end, and the industry is swamped right now with way too many Me First-ers, many of them recently migrated from other businesses (the toy industry, movie industry, etc.), in to make a quick buck.

I sense that many of the veterans in computer gaming – and I'm thinking of gamers, of designers, even of marketing people who started out and stayed with computer gaming as their main focus – are really frustrated right now with this fact. Part of that frustration is evident in what seems like an almost daily dissolution of the various kinds of communities, large and small, which had formed over the past decade. Everywhere seems like elsewhere right now, and nowhere like home, for anyone who's been with the biz since the Eighties. Gamers feel like companies they used to know and count on for certain things are now unknown quantities. Designers feel like they've got pressures on them to shift the focus of what they do away from their own core strengths and towards what some newbie thinks will sell… this week, at least. And so on.

What it boils down to is that there *is* no track record right now anyone can point to with full confidence, on any side. Everything's up in the air, it seems. That's an opportunity – and an enormous risk. It's also *incredibly* stressful. Oh well.

– Steve Wartofsky, Editor

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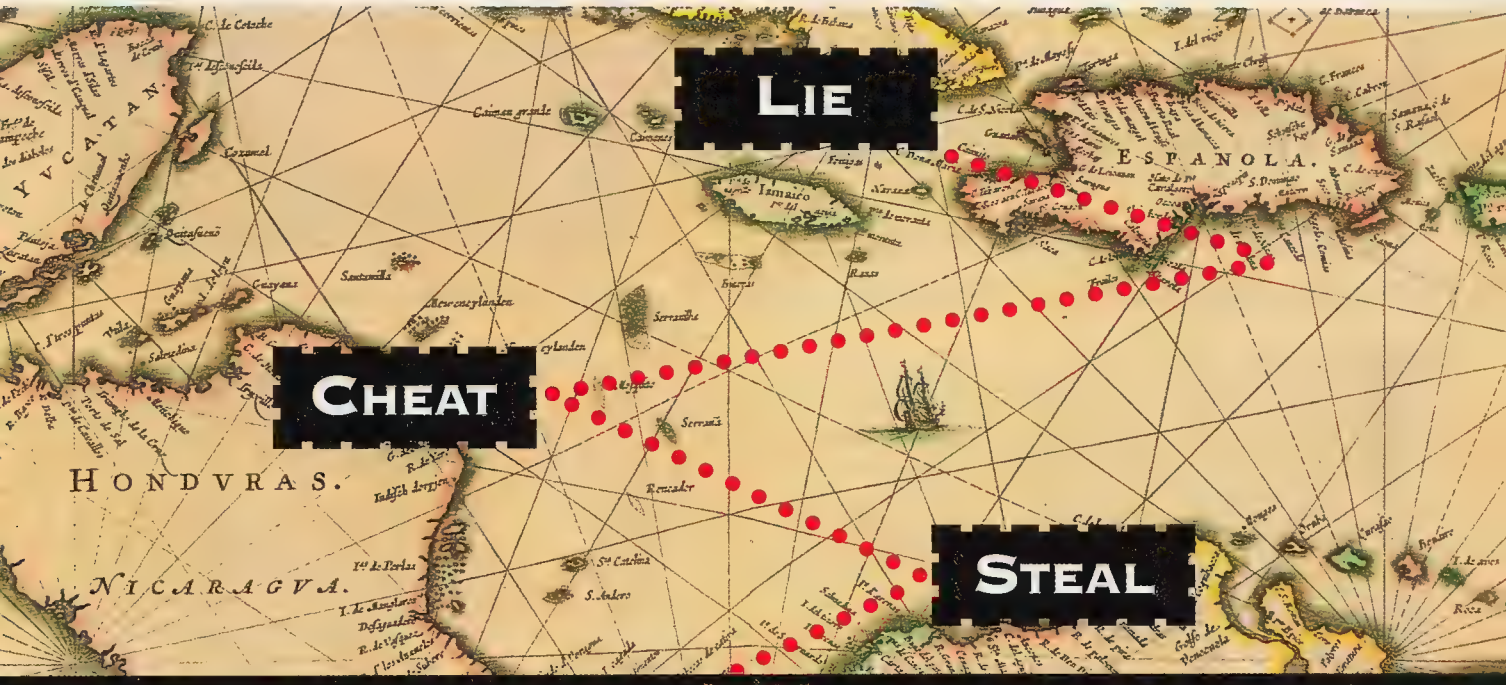

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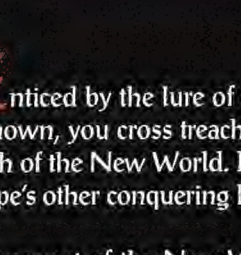

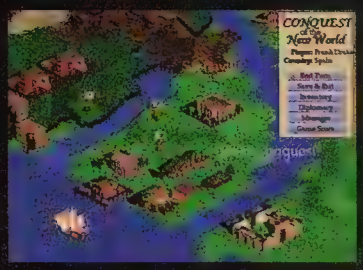

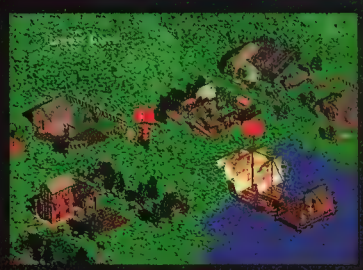

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MMX good...

With their newest Pentium in tow, Intel goes gaming at the 1996 CGDC

Apple goes gaming with Sprockets - would Dieter approve? Now we dance... would you like to touch my monkey?

The annual *Computer Game Developer's Conference* is the show to get an inkling on the technology and innovation that will pull the industry into the next decade (well, this being the computer industry, maybe it shows what it'll be like for the next year). Last year, a groovy Microsoft party at Paramount's Great America theme park beckoned developers to "come on over to Windows 95 and say hello to Direct X." This year it was "MMX good" as Intel rolled out the new Pentium MMX, the next generation of processors that are explicitly designed to speed up calculations that improve game performance.

MMX technology will start finding its way into the Pentium later this year, and will be in all versions of the Pentium and Pentium Pro that follow. MMX was developed with the cooperation of the game companies themselves (much like Microsoft's DirectX) and was directly influenced by the home PC and the needs of their users, hence the speed-ups to video, audio and graphics processing (for more information, see the sidebar). Epic MegaGames is the first game company to announce that they are working on an MMX accelerated game, and more are sure to follow.

Of interest but further down the road is Intel's Accelerated Video Port, a technology that will eliminate the current graphic bottleneck for graphics on the PC – the bus. PCI is fast enough for hard drive controllers, but video is a whole other thing. This technology will deliver, according to early conservative Intel estimates, over 1 million polygons per second, which is more than any machine currently available. This is without any sort of 3D accelerator – a combination of the two would yield staggering numbers (by the way, photo realism is considered 10 million polygons per second).

Microsoft wasn't asleep at the wheel. They announced that DirectX 2.0 was on the way at "Pax Romana," a toga party. DirectPlay is also ready, a technology for online games and service providers. The DirectPlay provider for the Internet is in alpha, but services already in place include modem to modem, LANs supported under Windows 95 and DWANGO. The aim is to simplify connectivity; DirectPlay not only integrates with Windows 95 and NT, but adds tools to create waiting rooms to find opponents, and billing software so you can definitely be charged to play. ActiveMovie is another new API that will bring MPEG and streaming video to the Internet. Finally, DirectX will be expanding to Windows NT and the Power Macintosh by the end of 1996.

Speaking of Apple, the "Game Olympics" they sponsored was a good idea (teams competed in a number of Mac-based games, from *Descent* to *Marathon 2*), but their announcement of their *Game Sprockets* API sounded more and more like Apple playing catch-up to Microsoft. The *Sprockets* sound like DirectX redux – there are new APIs for input (joystick, mouse, etc.), sound, speech and 3D (QuickDraw 3D is now available for Windows 95 as well). While all Mac developers are no doubt enthralled by these developments, it may be a case of too little too late.

3D technology was in abundant display. If one had to bet on one card to buy, it would have to be the Diamond Stealth 3D 2000, based on the S3 ViRGE chipset. Ignore the Edge 3D – this is the real deal, as it combines lightning- fast DOS and Windows performance with superb 3D. Opposition will likely come from cards based on the Rendition Verit(chipset, including the new 3D Blaster from Creative Labs. Cirrus Logic will be using the 3D acceleration from 3DO's next generation M2 console system. NEC is going with VideoLogic's PowerVR. Matrox is sticking with their homegrown Millennium, which is the best performing card currently available. Other players include the ATI 3D Rage, Brooktree's BtV Mediastream and 3DFX's Voodoo Graphics.

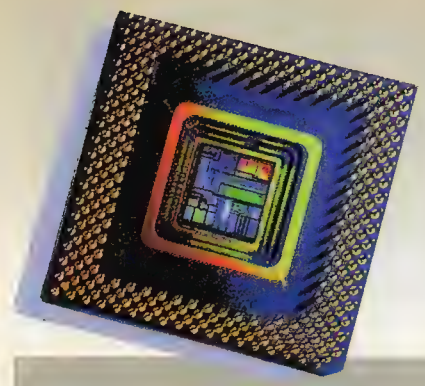
Despite the emphasis on technology, roundtables, speeches and conferences were held on a variety of topics. Ernest Adams "In Praise of Sex and Violence" called for the industry to police itself, and start creating mature entertainment for adults rather than targeting 12 year old boys. If we continue to do that, he argued, Congress will come a callin'. "Professor" Brian Moriarty, formerly of Infocom, LucasArts and Rocket Science and current Mpath guru had a bizarre lecture that railed against the current fascination with CD-ROM technology and praised the Internet. His reasoning is that all games should be downloadable. His company, Mpath is, of course, doing online gaming, and Moriarty's last game was the two-CD rail-shooter *Lodestar*.

This presentation was just one of many about online gaming. Everyone wants to do it. It's the future. All games will be online experiences. TEN and Mpath will show the way. The only flaw is that no one is actually making any money in online gaming, and the technical hurdles are substantial. The industry definitely suffers from the "Everyone's doing it, so why don't we" syndrome.

Games spotlighted for excellence by fellow developers included *MechWarrior 2*, *Full Throttle*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Hexen*, *Warcraft II*, *Steel Panthers*, *Command & Conquer*, *Crusader: No Remorse*, *You Don't Know Jack* and *Stonekeep*.

Aside from online gaming, the general mood of the conference was one of concern. Concern that the industry was at its peak and was headed for a major slump. The signs are all there – sales of major titles this Christmas were down (*11th Hour* seemed to be the biggest disappointment). Employees of various companies were leaving in droves. *Myst* is still outselling everything else. What does it all mean? Who knows, but 1996 should be an interesting year.

— *Steve Bauman*



MMX at a glance

Intel's MMX technology is the biggest change in the company's CPU architecture since the switch from the 386. It's an addition to existing CPU architecture, not a completely new design. This new, additional architecture is focused on improving multimedia and communications applications. MMX technology will first appear in the P55C Pentium processor, slated to appear in the fourth quarter of '96. MMX will eventually become part of all Intel processors, probably by the end of 1997.

Intel acknowledges that the home computing market now consumes most multimedia applications. These programs, consisting of games, entertainment and educational software are perfect for the new MMX technology. MMX adds 57 new instructions to CPU architecture. The instructions speed up some compute-intensive loops in multimedia and communications programs. While the loops only make up about 10% of the overall code, they can use up to 90% of the execution time. In preliminary tests, MMX has increased performance from 50% to 400%, depending on the application.

One of the features of the new Pentium is that the chip can now do 64 bit parallel processing. For example, in order to process 24 bit (16.7 million) color, the computer must process eight bits of red, green and blue. This requires three times the processing of eight bit color (256 colors). The MMX Pentium can process all three colors in one cycle, theoretically allowing games to operate in 24 bit color without a speed hit. Sound also can get a boost, as the system will be able to process four 16-bit samples simultaneously, lowering the overhead required to mix and process sound.

MMX will be easy for programmers to implement. It is fully compatible with existing operating systems and applications. Developers will only need to modify a very small portion of their code to enjoy the performance boost. MMX tools are already available for game developers and hardware vendors. You should see programs and multimedia hardware arrive in late fall that will maximize the benefits of MMX.

— John Nolan & Steve Bauman

this month on the web:

check out the latest on:

EarthSiege 2
Zork Nemesis
Silent Hunter
Battle Isle 2220
Star Trek Deep Space Nine: Harbinger
The Rise and Rule of Ancient Empires
Conquest of the New World

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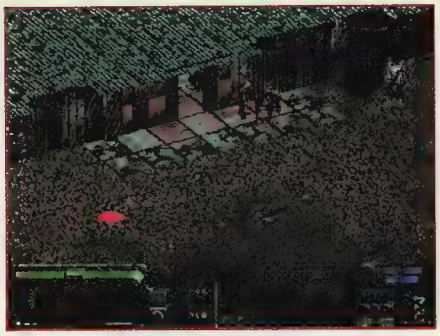
Briefs

Bite sized bits of information in a comfortable size

... MetalLords: RIP – The writing has been on the wall for a while, but now it's official. New World Computing has canceled the promising *MetalLords: The Inner Circle* (our May, '95 cover). SimTex, the developer, was purchased by Spectrum HoloByte after the project had started, and as could be expected, they redirected most of their efforts toward other projects, such as *Master of Orion II*. In other New World news, *Heroes of Might and Magic* and *Chaos Overlords* will be available on Mpath when it launches sometime in the coming months... Absurd sales figures – The phenomenon known as *Myst* continues. In January, it passed the two million sales mark, making it the first entertainment title to reach that number. Ouch... If you knew Jack, like I know Jack – Berkeley Systems will be releasing a 400 question add-on pack for *You Don't Know Jack*, the best party game on the planet. If you're having anyone over in the future, go buy it. Now... Domark in Double Trouble – *Double Trouble*, the adventure game we previewed last issue, will be released by Domark in the US. In other news, they are going solo in the sales channel, splitting from Spectrum HoloByte, where they've been an affiliate label since 1993. Finally, they are in the process of acquiring US Gold... Off to the Links – Access will be releasing *Links LS*, the latest version of the world's best-selling golf game, on May 28th. Its home course will be the stunning Kapalua Resort in Maui, with Arnold Palmer tagging along at La Trobe. Gamers will be able to explore the clubhouse via Access' "Virtual World" 3D technology from *Under a Killing Moon*... More red ink – The red ink continues to flow at Spectrum HoloByte, as they've posted yet another multimillion dollar loss ($9.9 million, to be exact). They've also adopted a "shareholder rights plan" as a safeguard against a hostile takeover bid... Cruising into theaters near you – is the trailer for *Wing Commander IV*. Is it a movie? Is it a game? Is it an interactive movie? If it's the latter, why can't you make Mark Hamill shut-up in mid sentence?... Bye-bye Ted, we hardly knew ya – Turner Interactive has become the latest casualty of the receding demand for multimedia software. *Dinotopia* will be their last release...

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

HyperBlade



GURPS: Post Nuclear

What you'll be playing in '96

A preview of the 1996 Electronic Entertainment Exposition

The upcoming Electronic Entertainment Exposition, to be held in Los Angeles in May, will be the most chaotic event in gaming history. Our coverage last year was over 27 pages long. This year's show is bigger. Every company will be displaying their wares, each trying to scream louder than the company next to them, creating a lot of sound and fury signifying very little. A few companies decided that they'd rather get the information out ahead of time, away from the screaming masses, so here's a brief look at what may be in store for gamers this holiday season.

Accolade

Deadlock should be out by E3, and this strategy game with Internet and network multiplayer play is looking quite sharp. *Star Control 3* features some of the niftiest technology for the alien conversations that are so important to its bizarre combination of strategy, adventure, role-playing and arcade combat. *Dirt Race: Xtreme* is the working title of a 3D off-road racing game (this is the latest trend, thanks to Sega's *Rally*). *Vandals* is an action game, *Football '96* is their next generation football game designed from scratch and finally, *Jack Nicklaus' Golden Bear Edition* is their latest golf game.

Activision

On a roll is how you would have to describe this once left for dead company. With *MechWarrior 2*, *Spycraft* and *Zork Nemesis* under their belt, Activision is continuing with quality product. *HyperBlade* is an excellent looking and playing 3D future sports game, while *Interstate '76* is where the 3D engine from *MechWarrior 2* will find its new home (the Mech license now lies with Spectrum HoloByte). *Time Commando* is an action adventure designed by Frederick Raynal, who designed the superb *Relentless*. You are a virus exterminator who's been thrown into a time warp and must navigate through nine different time periods, using the weaponry of that era to fight all of the bad guys. *The Elk Moon Murder* is an all-video mystery adventure starring Amanda Donohoe and set in New Mexico. The next *Pitfall* will go 3D, *Planetfall*, the sequel to, well, *Planetfall*, is back to life (minus its creator, Steve Meretzky) and *Sacred Ground* is another mystery adventure.

Broderbund

The big news out of the big B is what they won't be releasing, not what they are releasing. Yes, that means that *Myst II* has been pushed back to the end of 1997, though Cyan has been trickling out the occasional bit of art on their web site to whet our appetites. They will be releasing the next game from Jordan Mechner (of *Prince of Persia* and *Karateka* fame), called *The Last Express*.

empire Interactive

empire will release *The Web* pinball game themselves (there was talk that Acclaim would do it). Our review of the European version was quite favorable. Coming soon from Rowan Software is *Flying Corps*, a flight simulator, and empire has also signed up *Terry Bradshaw Fantasy Football*. TalonSoft will be releasing their next two *Battleground* games, *Waterloo* and *Shiloh*.

Grolier Interactive

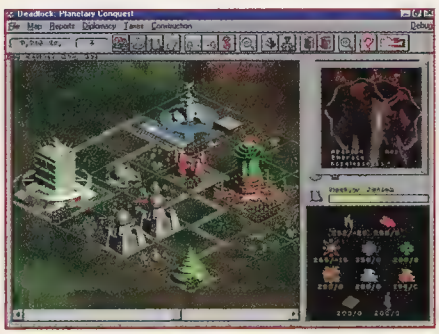
Another media giant enters the fray. *Ironclads* is one of those multimedia games where you control one of the Civil Wars' finest ships (OK, their only ships). *Banzai Bugs* is a 3D flight simulator where you control, uh, bugs (is it ironic?). *Surf and Destroy* is an arcade game where you enter the Internet and battle weird eyeballs and toxic baby dolls.

GTE Entertainment

NCAA Championship Basketball will feature a player option to recruit and build teams from scratch, statistical development over time, and over 4500 frames of animation allowing for more than 100 player moves. *Timelapse Ancient Civilizations* was previewed last month, and still looks amazing, while *The Titanic* is CyberFlix' latest adventure. Prevent World War I while trying not to drown. Slurp. Gurgle. Gurgle.

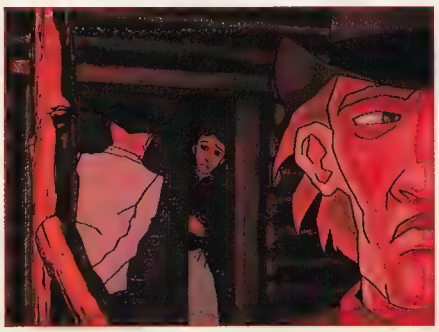
Interplay Productions

The first quarter of 1997 will see *GURPS: Post Nuclear* is a turn-based isometric CRPG based on the Steve Jackson table top game. Another title is *M.A.X.: Mechanized Assault and Xploration*, a simultaneous turn-based strategy game. Other titles will also be shown – these are just some sneak peeks.



Deadlock: Planetary Conquest

NCAA Championship Basketball



Outlaws

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter

Necrodome

ABC Monday Night Football

LucasArts

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II is the multiplayer sequel to *Dark Forces*. In addition to the multiplayer, you can also wield the lightsaber as your instrument of death. *Outlaws* is an action adventure with multiplayer play where you're the man with no name seeking vengeance in some crappy old town. *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* is another multiplayer game that everyone on the planet has been asking for. *Afterlife* is previewed on page 30, and *Mortimer and the Riddles of the Medallion* is a kiddie adventure.

Rocket Science

Maybe the second batch of games from this company will actually be good. One already looks good – it was demoed for us personally by its designer, the legendary Steve Meretzky. *The Space Bar* is a 3D detective adventure where you can travel to various worlds to help aliens solve their personal problems. *Obsidian* is another 3D graphic adventure, *Ganymede* is a first-person 3D space combat game (multiplayer) and *Rocket Jockey* is a 3D multiplayer action game that will require a 3D accelerator.

Sierra

This is one company that plans on releasing thousands of games in 1996 (not really, it just seems that way). *Lighthouse* and *Robert E. Lee: Civil War General* were previewed last month, and *Missionforce: Cyberstorm* can be found on page 40. *Front Page Sports Baseball Pro '96* is previewed on page 112 as well. The next *3D Ultra Pinball*, titled *Creep Night* is on the way with four new tables, while *Betrayal in Antara* is looking quite good. We'll have more on this one in coming months. *Trophy Bass 2* will allow computer fishermen to compete over networks or the Internet, while *Cyber Gladiators* will allow them to kick each other's butts in a 3D fighting game with cool looking robots (when they're done fishing). *Hunter Hunted* is a cool looking side-scrolling action game, sort of a supercharged version of *Abuse*. Al Lowe returns to his lecherous ways with *Leisure Suit Larry 7: Yank Hers Away*, where Larry hangs out on a cruise ship and it ain't the Love Boat. *Lords of the Realms II* is the sequel to one of Impressions' most popular games. *Red Baron II* is, of course, the sequel to one of *everyone's* favorite games. *Rama* finds author Gentry Lee teaming with Arthur C. Clarke on an adventure set on Rama, while *Phantasmagoria 2: A Puzzle of Flesh* is not a sequel, per se, but rather a new horror tale featuring more sex and violence. Also on the way is a role-playing strategy game based on TSR's *Birthright* games. Whew. We should be covering these things for the rest of our lives.

Spectrum HoloByte MicroProse & OverTime Sports

Star Trek: Generations is *TrekDoom*. *Grand Prix 2* is the long-delayed sequel to the popular F1 racing game. *Track Attack* and *Vette: San Francisco Thrills* are arcade racing games. *Falcon 4.0* is, well, *Falcon 4.0*. Don't expect to see it until '97. MicroProse will be delivering *Magic: The Gathering* (finally!), *Citizens: Backwater Affairs*, the soap opera strategy game (erm, yeah), *Master of Orion II: Battle at Antares* (you know about this one), *X-COM: Apocalypse* (more on this later), *Super Heroes* and *European Air War*. All of these look pretty good. OverTime Sports, the joint venture between Spectrum HoloByte and Capital Cities/ABC, weighs in with *ABC Monday Night Football* and *ABC Sports College Football*.

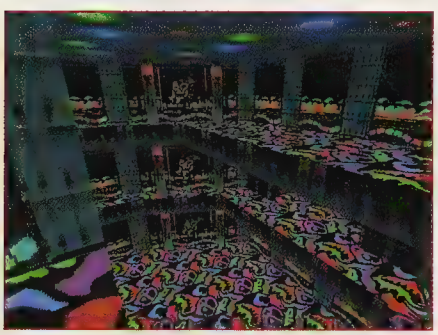
SSI

Action game aficionados can look forward to the release of two games in '96. *Silencer*, a game of covert (and not so covert) missions in a dark future ruled by all-powerful corporations, will be released for both Win95 and Mac. Coming for Windows 95 and PlayStation is *Necrodome*, a first-person driving game with realistic physics. In addition to *Silent Hunter*, sea-sim fans can look forward to the release of *Great Naval Battles V* late this summer, and strategy gamers will get their share with the next game in the *Five Star* series, *Star General* (previewed on page 42). Wargamers will finally see the release of *Age of Rifles* late this Summer; from what SSI told use and what designer Norm Koger has said on-line, it sounds like they're really trying to get this one "just right." Perhaps the biggest news for wargamers is SSI's announcement of *Steel Panthers II: Modern Battles*. Another Gary Grigsby design, this one will feature a lot of desert battles.

Viacom New Media

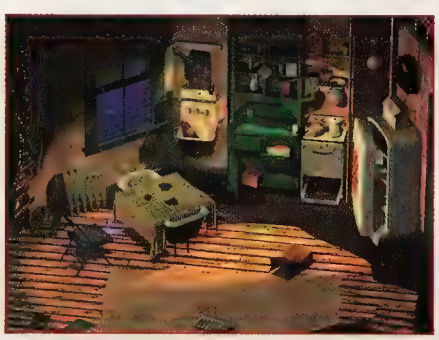
The properties are finally coming out of this media giant. First up will be *Snow Crash*, an action adventure based on the novel by Neal Stephenson. 30 missions and four endings in this 3D game. *MTV's Aeon Flux* puts the game in six action-packed missions with the worlds least clothed and deadliest heroines. *Deathdrome* is a multiplayer 3D blast-a-thon, while *Joe's Apartment* is based on a short film MTV used to run where cockroaches ruled a guy's life. With this and *Bad Mojo* in the same year, when can we see *RoachDoom*?

There, that wasn't so bad, was it? Now we only have 35,000 other games to cover come E3. See you next time. ■



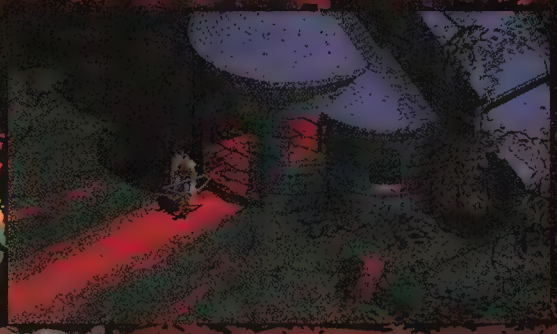
Snow Crash

MTV's Aeon Flux



Joe's Apartment

From the Makers of WarCraft II: Tides of Darkness 1995's Game



- Join forces with other adventurers through multiplayer support
- Play directly over Internet
- An ever changing gothic world brought to life in SVGA
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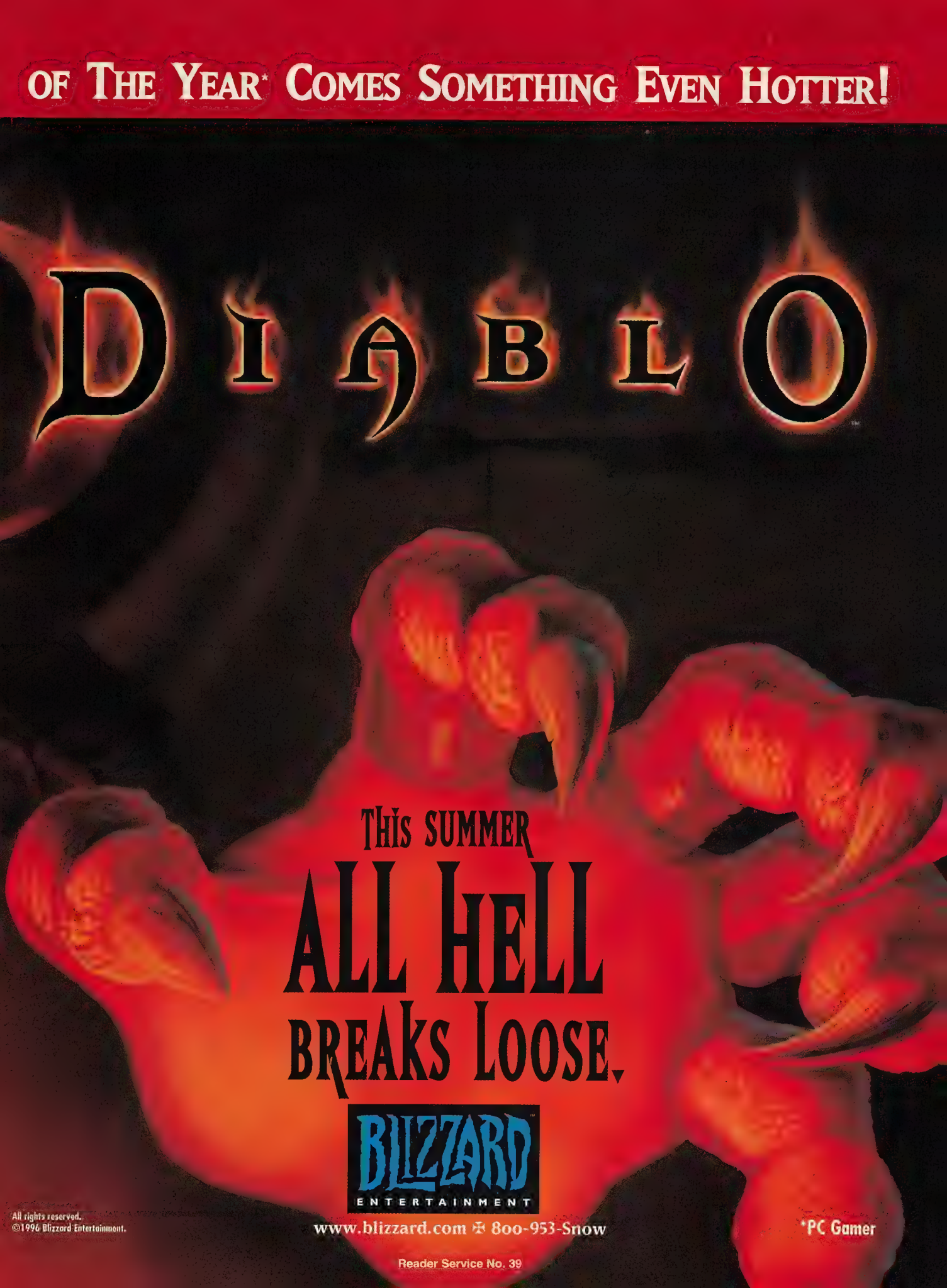
Vengeance, power, intellect and magic, these are the tools you will need to battle the Lord of Evil, Diablo. Embark if you dare upon a dark and sinister quest that will pull you into the very depths of hell itself...and beyond.


OF THE YEAR* COMES SOMETHING EVEN HOTTER!
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Reverence

Earth, Wind and Fire Away

Some might call "Windows 95 action game" an oxymoron. However, recently seen lassoing the platform, wrestling it to the ground and securing it with huge double hitch knots is Cyberdreams in its projected third quarter release of *Reverence*.

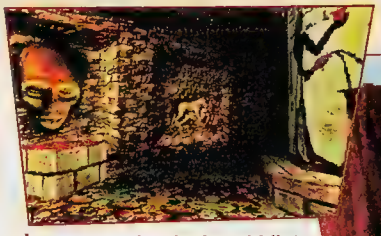
Save mankind from the apocalyptic gods of fire, earth, water and air. You are a man of courage and skill randomly chosen by the gods. Unless you don't happen to be a man, in which case you pretend to be a man of courage and skill randomly chosen by the gods. Believing the human race to be too lethargic and inequitable — useless slug-like matter, actually — the gods are bent on wiping out the entire human race. Traveling in a first-person view, the player will battle through twenty increasingly difficult levels in a fight for his life and the chance to advance. As usual, what's waiting around the corner is bound to be worse.

Each of the gods is surrounded by a world infused with powers connected to its elemental origin. The player must visit each Realm and seek to defeat its protector, confronting the specialized earthy, airy, windy or fiery weaponry.

Reverence provides the player with an arsenal of 20 conventional and non-conventional weapons and casting spells to be found throughout the levels. One may play the levels in any order the effect of which may alter the outcome.

"We are thrilled to be working on our first combat-oriented action title," says Paul Licari, president of Cyberdreams. And we hope to be, Paul.

—*Cindy Yans*



Is that Cerebus in the middle? We're scared to think what else it could be...

With that hat, I'll bet he doesn't get re-elected Tibetan god of wisdom

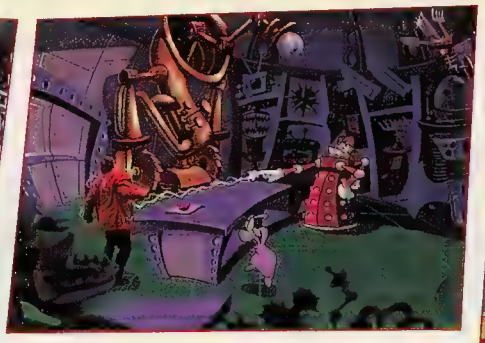
Kokyangwuti, Wuti for short, is an ultimate fashion statement: note the chic clogs from L.L. Bean

http://www.cdmag.com

Stay

Toonstruck

Daddy of Fluffy Fluffy Bun Bun goes fish flushing



At last sighting, Virgin Interactive artists were seen with long beards and unkempt fingernails after over three and a half years of non-stop frame by frame rendering and animation blending of *Toonstruck*, the broadly stroked and zany adventure game starring Christopher Lloyd as Drew Blanc, lead animator and creative director of the Fluffy Fluffy Bun Bun show. They have darkly circled eyes (the artists, not Lloyd and Bun Bun) and fiercely eager expressions as they render still and await the moment of release — when they can take their cots and sleeping bags back home and reacquaint themselves with friends and family.

We will then be treated to the luscious looking *Toonstruck*-on-the-shelf...a moment for which many of us have been waiting for quite some time. Hopefully its hundreds of hand-painted scenes of animation, hand painted background settings, digital animation and state-of-the-art digital betacam green-screen footage will pay off. Reoccurring animation cycles are blended with specifically filmed action sequences through motion-tracking and special morphing techniques, resulting in a live-action character that is capable of interacting with its environment and can truly be controlled by the player.

Players must guide Drew through three bizarre and twisted kingdoms, solving puzzles (one of which has to do with perfecting the art of fish flushing), setting booby traps and taking part in a series of shenanigans to outwit an odd cast of foes. One kingdom, governed by the benevolent King Hugh, played by David Ogden Stiers (*MASH*), is populated with Fluffy Fluffy Bun Bun's fluffy, fluffy characters. Another ruled by the sinister Count Nefarious played by Tim Curry (*Rocky Horror Picture Show)* is inhabited by weird and sadistic characters. A third offers us Spike the Clown who likes to torture balloon animal sculptures.

Toonstruck boasts three CD's of gameplay in four acts with dozens of puzzles, and has a toonful score that seems influenced by every cartoon style since the dawn of animation. It's a Ren & Stimpy & Itchy & Scratchy & Bugs and Daffy feeling atmosphere invaded by the likes of Lloyd — *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*? in reverse, as it were. While weary of waiting, still I wait with bated breath, clean-shaven and manicured, but weary nonetheless. Release!

—Cindy Yans

Current

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Prey

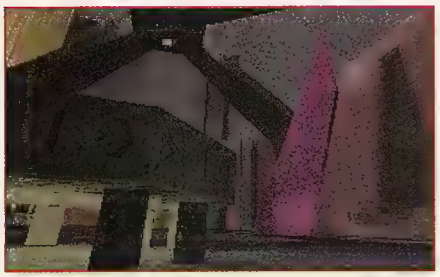
Kill or be killed in 3D realms' Homeric epic

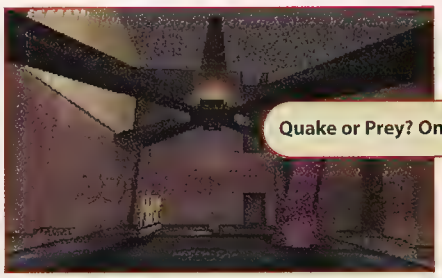
If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then 3D Realms must really love id. Now that *Duke Nukem 3D* has finally unseated *Doom* in the hearts of gamers worldwide, they've now set their sights on a new target – id's *Quake*. Never mind it's not out yet – 3D Realms' new 3D engine, to be debuted in *Prey*, promises everything that id's delivering with *Quake* – six degrees of freedom, real world lighting, a new architecture that allows more complex environments, polygon characters and multiple selectable SVGA resolutions.

The plot is worthy of the greats, Homer, Virgil and id. In *Prey*, there are some aliens running around the galaxy gathering people to hunt for fun. Guess who they picked this time? As the plot unfolds, you will discover the truth of why you were chosen, who nabbed you and how it all ties into the universe.

Prey is also being designed with multiplayer play in mind. Like *Quake*, they are going to a full client-server system, with play over a LAN or the Internet. Multiple machines will be able to link together, with some set up as rendering systems and others as pure servers to speed up the action. 3D cards, controllers and virtual reality helmets will be supported. Level editors will be included. Lives will be lost. Blood will be spilled. The smell of death will be everywhere. You've been warned.

– Steve Bauman





Quake or Prey? Only their hairdresser knows for sure . . .

MORE BRIEFS. . Get imaginative – The Imagination Network has announced that they'll be offering online versions of most of Sierra's upcoming lineup, including *Front Page Sports: Baseball*, *Mission Force: Cyberstorm*, *The Incredible Machine 3*, *Trophy Bass* and *Red Baron II*. . . **Companies continue to flock to TEN** – 3D Realms is the latest company to sign an exclusive deal with TEN for online games, this one granting them rights for five years to games like *Duke Nukem 3D*. . .

AOL in bed with everyone – Reaffirming its status as the company who'll make deals with anyone and everyone, America Online has joined forces with Netscape and Microsoft to bundle their browsers with AOL. Microsoft's deal means that you'll get an AOL icon on future Windows 95 desktops (yippee. . . how many of you have managed to get rid of the stupid MSN icon?).

AOL will also be making Java available to its web geeks, currently the most reviled folks on the Usenet. . . **InterAct gets interactive** – InterAct Accessories is ramping up on PC controllers, with multiple gamepads, joysticks and all-in-one 2-player game packs. They are also releasing the *Game Shark*, a cheat utility for the PC that is currently a favorite on the consoles. If you can't beat 'em, cheat 'em. . **Gravis gets a GRiP** – called "The Ultimate Fighting Machine" on the box, and bundled with Acclaim's *Wrestlemania, the Arcade Game* (perhaps in case people haven't gotten the "grip" joke, yet?), Gravis' GRiP multiport unit not only advances simultaneous multi-player on one machine, it will have complete support in every future Windows95 DirectInput(game. Digital control finally makes it to the PC. . **Networks on the cheap** – Apexx will be releasing the *GameLAN*, a home network that allows gamers to hook up computers via phone cable and their parallel port. It supports all networking features of Windows, as well as IPX for DOS games. Check 'em out at http://www.apexxtech.com. . . ■

FIRST LOOK

Pinball Construction Kit

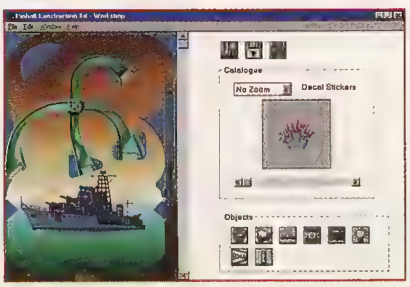
Build the pinball table of your dreams

From the "duh, it's about time someone resurrected that idea" file comes 21st Century Entertainment's *Pinball Construction Kit*. If you're a long-time gamer, you no doubt remember Bill Budge's seminal *Pinball Construction Set*, one of the first titles from an upstart company called Electronic Arts. *Pinball Construction Kit* will attempt to recreate that classic for Windows users later this year.

The game will include 64 basic table layouts with pre-placed ramps, side guards and flippers. The editor will allow the gamer to position all varieties of bumpers and ball traps while adding an overall graphic theme with colors and shapes, as well as import your own graphics for that personal touch. There will also be a series of ready-made sound and music themes to choose from. Set the scoring system and it's balls away.

Tables created with *Pinball Construction Kit* will unfortunately only be usable to those who also have the program, something that users of other game creators like Maxis' *Klik & Play* didn't have to worry about. Whether that limits the games potential appeal remains to be seen.

—Steve Bauman



Go to town placing flippers and targets

SINKHA

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Immerse yourself in a futuristic world surrounded by mystery—an alluring world with no escape. "Sinkha," the first novel of its kind, contains remarkable 3-D images and animations. The surrealistic sounds, music and intriguing plot draw you in, holding you spellbound until the story's end.

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Rand & Robyn Miller
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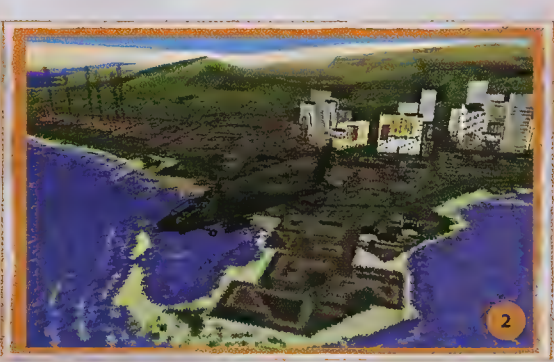
Getting ready to take to the skies again

By Steve Wartofsky

While a number of "lite" sims have appeared recently, it's been awhile since a serious piece of simulation work's made a showing. That's changing fast: with the imminent release of Interactive Magic's *Hind*, and then *F-16 Fighting Falcon*; with Mission Studios/Interplay's upcoming, marvelous *Jetfighter III*; with Electronic Arts' recent *ATF* and *Apache Longbow*. Fans of in-depth, no-holds-barred, challenging air combat will have plenty to enjoy over the course of 1996 (and beyond). Not even mentioning the multitude of online multi-player efforts currently underway (grist for John Nolan's mill in a future round-up article), you'll probably need all the fingers of both your hands – at least – to count the number of air combat sims out and on the way.

What are the main overall strengths of this generation of effort in the genre? First and foremost is a refreshing dedication to the challenge of accuracy, this time around not just in the area of performance specs but also in the conceptualization of the combat environment – present-day or historical – players will find themselves situated in. Even with designs committed to a more abstract approach to the gameworld, i.e. where the main focus remains on the particulars of aircraft performance, enough contextualizing material is being made available to saturate the player in many hours of speculation on the purposes to which the represented aircraft might be put. And in those designs where serious commitment has been made to historical accuracy (*1943: The European Air War*, *Red Baron II*), the particulars of the gameworld's own, dynamic performance have been paid detailed attention to in ways unprecedented for computer gaming and simulation. You know you're in simulation heaven when you can see the ground observer's binoculars – pointing at you – in your gunsights! You know people on the design end are paying attention when you can find enemy pilots rocketing out of their damaged planes in their ejection seats, complete with full animation of the ejection rocket's flames. This is not just graphic detail; it's evidence of incredible attention paid to fleshing out the environment within which the player is operating.

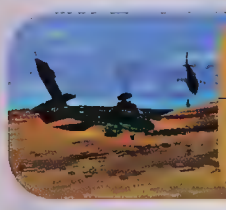
Most ambitious, and still in some ways off in the future, is the elaboration of role-playing and real-time, full-scale command perspective wargaming for air combat simulation. *EF2000* has done some marvelous things in the latter area with its *Harpoon*-like campaign engine, and *Falcon 4.0* will – we think – point the way, along with *Red Baron II*, for those interested in incorporating in full-scale role-playing in a combat environment. With any luck, we can hope that *Falcon 4.0* and subsequent work will signal Spectrum Holobyte's renewed involvement with their Electronic Battlefield aspirations.



AH-64D Longbow:
[1] Objects are extremely detailed yet they don't "warp" when you get close to them. Outstanding!
[2] All terrain was created using USGS info. Landmarks such as Panama city have been diligently modeled
[3] Aircraft are modeled correctly. You'll enjoy an performance advantage over a Hind just as you would in real life

The problem with such ambitions, and with all the new detail designers are currently adding to their serious air combat simulation efforts, is that many players may never end up really enjoying the whole show. With limits on time and energy, too many players in the past ended up stuck with Instant Action and maybe a step or two beyond that, just learning how to fly the aircraft, and never got to the full-scale campaign work to test it out in all its glory (in some past designs, it seems like the designers never really got there, either). The challenge this time around is going to be how to get the player all the way in to the most in-depth portions of the simulation, without giving them the potentially immense task of having to start out in a cockpit they may never get beyond. We hope that in some instances, designers will have the opportunity to offer players the chance to play from a number of different perspectives – command as well as tactical – from the start, and that, if such multi-perspective designs show up, they'll work equally well from whatever point of view the player chooses to jump in from.

That's a stiff challenge; let's see who takes it up and what they do with it in the upcoming year. Best of luck to everyone working in one of the most challenging genres in computer gaming! Now, on with the feature.



Jane's Combat Simulations: AH-64D Longbow

For nearly 100 years, the name Jane's (as in Jane's Information Group - publishers of military reference materials) has been synonymous with accuracy. Now think about Origin, a name synonymous with their slogan "we create worlds." If you put these two leaders of their respective fields together, naturally you'd have to imagine that their slogan would then become "we create accurate worlds," right? Well, prepare to be blown away, because that's what Jane's Combat Simulations is all about: ultra-realistic combat flight sims based on the most accurate real world information available without a security clearance. The flight sim world may never be the same.

[1] This is what Longbow really looks like. Best of all, you can fly it with all detail on machines that exist today
[2] When you realize that this arming form checklist is a copy of the real checklist used by the U.S. Army, you'll begin to appreciate the thought and care that went into Longbow
[3] Hellfire away! Even the weapons have been modeled correctly based on JANE'S information

Andy Hollis of *Gunship, F-15 Strike Eagle II* and *III*, and *F-19 Stealth Fighter* fame is producing Jane's CSR's *AH-64D Longbow* (not to be confused with Interactive Magic's *Apache*). Now before you hard core guys write off the realism angle based on those old sims, think for a second. While by today's standards, those sims are not considered very realistic, back then, they were leading-edge realistic flight sims. What was limiting the realism factor was the equipment, not the vision. After talking with Andy at some length about *Longbow*, I can attest that his vision is as complete as ever, and now that the hardware is much better (although we still need a few more free clock cycles for anyone to produce the "ultimate flight sim"), he is again taking the phrase "leading edge" to new heights.

Okay, I know when phrases and words like "leading edge" and "hardware" are mentioned, it brings on nightmares of "CPU cycle suckers" to mind and let's face it, Origin products have never been known to be friendly to lower end hardware. However, I've seen *Longbow* in action and it runs just peachy on a P-133 with *all details on*. What's even more exciting is that *Longbow*'s graphics are spectacular.

Enough about the "eye candy," though; let's get to the important stuff.

Longbow was designed as a hard core, ultra-realism sim, but the rank amateur and shoot-em-up crowd have been given equal priority in the design goals. All gameplay and advanced features, such as individual flight model characteristics, can be toggled on or off to suit your skill level. However, you may not want to toggle them off, since the flight model in *Longbow* is the most advanced helicopter flight model ever seen on a PC. It is based on actual stability derivative information provided by Jane's, McDonnell Douglas (the manufacturer of the real AH-64), and "hands on" feedback from actual active duty AH-64 pilots. This is a quantum leap over the standard performance table flight models in use today. Details such as realistic collective, ground effect, weight effect, transitional lift, altitude effects, wind, and turbulence have all been modeled. But perhaps the most interesting is the full dynamics option. It introduces torque, tail rotor, and translating tendency effects.

Again, you can turn any or all of these options off if you're just starting. The Interactive Training mode is provided with a virtual flight instructor (complete with Texas drawl) and it is so good, many won't even need to crack open the manual to learn every system on the AH-64D. However, skipping the training would deprive you of the pleasure of reviewing the beefy, spiral bound manual which is packed with specs and info worthy of the Jane's name. Also included in this two CD-ROM package are mini video documentaries from the Jane's library for your enjoyment. But wait, there's much more.

At the heart of *Longbow* are the missions that take place within three theaters of operation:

The Interactive Training mode is provided with a virtual flight instructor ... and it is so good, many won't even need to crack open the manual to learn every system on the AH-64D.

By Ben Chiu

ANDERSON,

I NEED A VOLUNTEER.

THAT TANK UP THE ROAD? SOMEONE'S GOTTA TAKE IT OUT.

I NEED SOMEONE I CAN COUNT ON. SOMEONE WHO'S MAN ENOUGH TO RUN THROUGH MACHINE-GUN FIRE TO GET THE JOB DONE.

AND ANDERSON, THERE COULD BE A MEDAL IN IT FOR YA.

Anderson, Chuck. Sergeant. Leads 2nd Platoon's Recon team. Probably gotta wife back home. Damn good soldier. You give him an order and he figures out the best way to get the job done. So what's he doing cowering behind that bombed-out farmhouse?

Saving his own butt.

That's what you should expect if you order him to do something crazy. In Close Combat everything reacts like it does on the battlefield, from the ripping canvas hiss of the German MG42 machine gun to the screams of the men it hits. It all goes down right in front of you. In real time.

Americans vs. Germans: Which side you gonna take?

So there's no time to thumb through the manual. You work your mouse like a weapon. Point and click and boom, the shooting starts the second your men step off Omaha Beach and it don't let up 'til they've taken Saint-Lô. Troops, terrain, situations — if you want to get any more accurate, you'll have to shave your head.

Wanna go head to head with other military geniuses? All you need is a TCP/IP connection. And guts.

So look alive soldier; D-Day happens this July. Which means you don't have much time to kill.

Mac™ vs. Windows® 95: Which side you gonna take?

Microsoft

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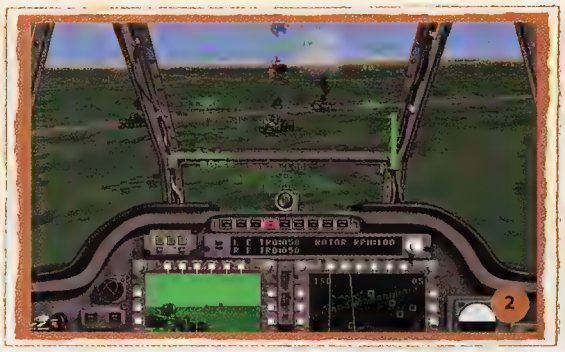
Panama, Iraq, and the Baltic region (there's the standard Instant Action mode for a quick fix as well). Dispersed between missions are theatrical video cut scenes; however, this is no *Wing/Strike Commander* game. There are no characters to interact with. The video is included to document your progress in a sort of "interactive documentary." In the Panama and Iraq theaters, there are 12 historically accurate missions based on actual op orders from Operation Just Cause and Desert Storm. Combine this with the fully textured rolling terrain created with actual US Geological Survey information and you're as close as you're likely to ever get to actually being there.



[1] **Scratch another tank**
[2] **All avionics and radar are as accurate as the government will allow**
[3] **Details such as which base you're operating from are reflected in different gameflow screens**

Longbow has over 250 missions in all, with the bulk of them found in the mission generator. The single campaign (more are expected as add-ons) takes place in the Baltics. It is complete with multi-branching trees and pilot career mode. You'll earn medals based on your performance, and a smart save game feature (which can also be toggled off) will save you from pulling your hair out on botched sorties. While the campaign missions are not randomly generated on-the-fly, completely different circumstances can unfold based on how you proceed; not only can they affect your present mission, but your subsequent missions as well. Finally, there's a mission planner to alter your weapons load-out and waypoints. You also have the option to fly the A or D model of the AH-64. This will allow you to fly the Panama historical missions with the AH-64A, just as the actual pilots did.

Everything in the avionics and weapons systems are based on Jane's information and/or the actual manufacturers' design books, to allow precise recreations. However, some aspects of the real Longbow are still classified.

During the missions you'll have control over your wingman and, if available, will be able to call in artillery and/or air strikes as well. Of worthy note is that your control over your wingman is more of an interactive relationship. You can assign PFZs (Priority Fire Zones) to your wingman, or upload his current targets to him, just as the real Longbow can. Your wingman is intelligent and flies like a human rather than a computer generated partner. There are several user selectable enemy AI levels that adjust response time and accuracy. Air opponents gain or lose spotting distance ability depending on the setting. There is none of that "you against the world" or "AI cheating" going on here. Everything corresponds to real world combat doctrine, so situations such as jets vs. choppers are not things that happen frequently. Unfortunately, you're limited to flying only in the role of pilot and not as the gunner; however, you do have some control over how much your gunner will assist you. No network/modem/multi-player feature is planned for *Longbow*'s initial release; however, Andy says that "*Longbow* is a living, breathing product… we'll continue to provide additional ways to enjoy the product. That'll probably take the form of additional missions with added terrain and weapons as well as a multi-player capability. I'm a multi-player guy from way back [if you're old enough, you might remember Andy did the first split screen, multi-player flight sim *MiG Alley Ace* for the Atari, back around 1983]. However, there was no way to provide all of that on any timely basis and still provide product now. I don't want to make people pay for something twice. Our intention is to do a smaller set of features 100% rather than a larger set only 80% each."

The amount of detail in Longbow is phenomenal. Everything in the avionics and weapons systems are based on Jane's information and/or the actual manufacturers' design books, to allow precise recreations. However, some aspects of the real Longbow are still classified. In these cases, the Origin Skunkworks Team engaged in informed speculation on how devices such as the ASE (Aircraft Survivability Equipment) and MFD (Multi Function Display) look and function, based on de-classified info, and they think what they came up with is very accurate. Look at the arming screen and you'll see that the arming forms checklist illustrated is a copy of the real checklist actually used by the U.S. Army; such details are evidence of the thought and care that is going into *Longbow*.

From the avionics to the targeting radar, everything works as it should, and all four IHADSS (Integrated Helmet And Display Sight System) modes are represented. However, two certain "liberties" with reality were taken to reduce waiting. One is an autopilot, and the other is time compression. (The real AH-64 has neither.) When flying real missions on real terrain, much of your mission is spent on your ingress and egress. Since *Longbow* remains true to real life, these two features will help limit your non-combat flight time and increase your combat time. Again, this is a toggle; you may want to consider flying complete whole missions for the ultimate in realism. NOE (Nap Of Earth) flying can really get your heart rate up. There is also a flight recorder and playback mode to help immortalize your greatest triumphs, or to help you figure out where that %@&#! chopper came from. Finally, last but not least is the most impressive keyboard mapping feature. This simple but ingenious option allows you to program any keystroke as one of the existing functions. Don't have a programmable stick? No problem.

Longbow is an ambitious project that is clearly out to set a new standard of flight sims for the rest of the industry to aspire to. So keep your radar on and your weapons master switch armed. It looks like it'll be well worth the wait. ■

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Reader Service No. 57

The next major step in historical air combat for Spectrum Holobyte/ MicroProse

by Steve Wartofsky

1943: The European Air War

Now *here's* an area of simulation which has been dormant for awhile, at least in a fully developed, single-player design: historical air combat. Sure, a number of major multi-player air combat sims are in progress, from ICI, Interactive Magic/Kesmai, Jaeger, but their context is a bit more abstract – the focus is on the planes themselves, not so much the actual history of the period and the wars they fought in.

The commitment over at MicroProse, by contrast, is clearly to the depth of the history present for the equipment being represented. *1943* – more than any other company effort except perhaps *Across the Rhine* – has as one of its key goals as full a representation of the historical situations within which combat took place as is possible in a design which will still be – primarily – an air combat simulation.

Players have had mixed reactions over the years to the series *1943* is clearly a part of. The original, *Task Force 1942*, the naval simulation, was a ground-breaking work in its time, and still remains a major consideration for anyone looking for a real simulation of WWII naval engagements, from a real-time command perspective. Novices to the whole idea of having a game which is both a real-time naval simulation and which also has a board-style, real-time command perspective were somewhat taken aback by the inability to have *complete* control over the processes of battle, the way most computer war gamers like to have; and those interested in something a little more fast-paced found the going a little slow. Historical perfectionists found things to gripe about, as they have with every attempted historically-oriented release since.

1942: The Pacific Air War was a major step forward in design, both in the ways it simplified some of the more ambitious elements of the original engine for *Task Force* and in the efforts it made to simulate some real, historical flight performance concerns and issues. Sure, there were performance discrepancies for this or that plane, and some oddities were introduced during the process of revision and bug-fix over time (the infamous enemy AI which forced computer-controlled planes to fly low to the ground every time after the first few moments of an encounter), but nothing else at the time took into account some of the peculiarities of WWII carrier-based air combat, such as the dangers of engine torque on take-off, or the serious limits on performance of WWII planes compared with present-day aircraft.

1943: The European Air War builds on the strengths of these two works, and makes some major additions. The most important from a coding point of view, according to both designer Mike Rea and programmer Mike Springer, is the jump to 32-bit code. This essentially increases the size of variables which can be used to represent flight performance, and thus allows improvements in the range and detail of performance that can be represented. WWII over Europe – for the period covered in this simulation – involved aircraft of extremely different capabilities. Doing justice to that fact necessitated the move to 32-bit code.

From a more general design perspective, the dynamic career system is one of the more important features. With greater mission variety than *1942* (which had over 300 missions…!), the sys-

…your effect on the opponent's resources during a previous mission will determine the number of planes, flights, perhaps the quality and expertise of opposing pilots which will be thrown up against you during ensuing missions in that career.

tem now allows a player to advance from wingman through to command status, based on success during play (an idea present in two previous MicroProse efforts, *Gunship 2000* and *Across the Rhine*). Players can choose to start out at different points during WWII, flying British, American or German careers, but in each case they'll be limited by the realities of the history they're engaging. You won't be able to introduce "fantasy" combinations of aircraft and time periods, in other words; you work with what was there in, say, 1942 in Britain as part of the 357th.

Your successes and failures in-mission will do more than send you down this or that mission tree; your effect on the opponent's resources during a previous mission will determine the number of planes, flights, perhaps the quality and expertise of opposing pilots which will be thrown up against you during ensuing missions in that career. This provides a kind of situational dynamism which doesn't have to rely heavily on the sophistication of a dynamic mission generator, as is the case with some other designs, yet frees the player up from the feeling that wins and losses just move the player statically down this or that mission branch.

What this means is that *1943* will not have the kind of mission editor *1942* had; it simply wouldn't be possible to give the player the same kind of unit-by-unit control over mission design with the current dynamic engine. Instead, players will mainly control the number of forces on each side. The mission generator will then be responsible for placement, waypoints, etc. This will make for a much more useful system for those who'd like a little suspense during a player-created mission.

With these additions and optimizations, a continuing commitment to historical verisimilitude, substantial improvements in graphics quality and speed (don't forget that *1942* really debuted the concept of the virtual cockpit – it's been significantly optimized this time around, we're told) and lots of work being done on modem/network play, it looks like *1943: The European Air War* will provide historical air combat fans plenty to consider when it releases, hopefully later this year. ■

Planes available for player	Other planes
P38 H&J	Me410
P47 C&D	B17
P51 B&D	B24
Hurricane	B26
Spitfire Ia, IX, XIV	Mosquito
Typhoon	Ju87 'Stuka'
Tempest	Ju88
Me109 E4, G6, K4	He111
Me110 C&G	
FW190 A8, D9	
Me262	

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What Hath Lucas Wrought?

By Cindy Yans

Handbook for the Recently Deceased — Write your own with Afterlife

What happens to us after we assume room temperature? Besides rigor mortis, that is. While you're posing as worm food and the last shriveled petal falls from the funeral wreath; when your epitaph's forgotten and there's bird poop on your tombstone... Is that all there is? Many don't think so. But what *can* we expect? It sure would be cool to know, but for now — let's speculate.

Mike Stemmle, of *Sam & Max Hit the Road* fame brings us *Afterlife*, a Sim/Strategy game poured forth from the loins of LUCASARTS. "Think of yourself as a regional manager for the Great Beyond," explains Mike. With a pretty bizarre concept for a sim game (although I thought *Pizza Tycoon* was right up there), *Afterlife* puts you in charge of the design and maintenance of the hereafter.

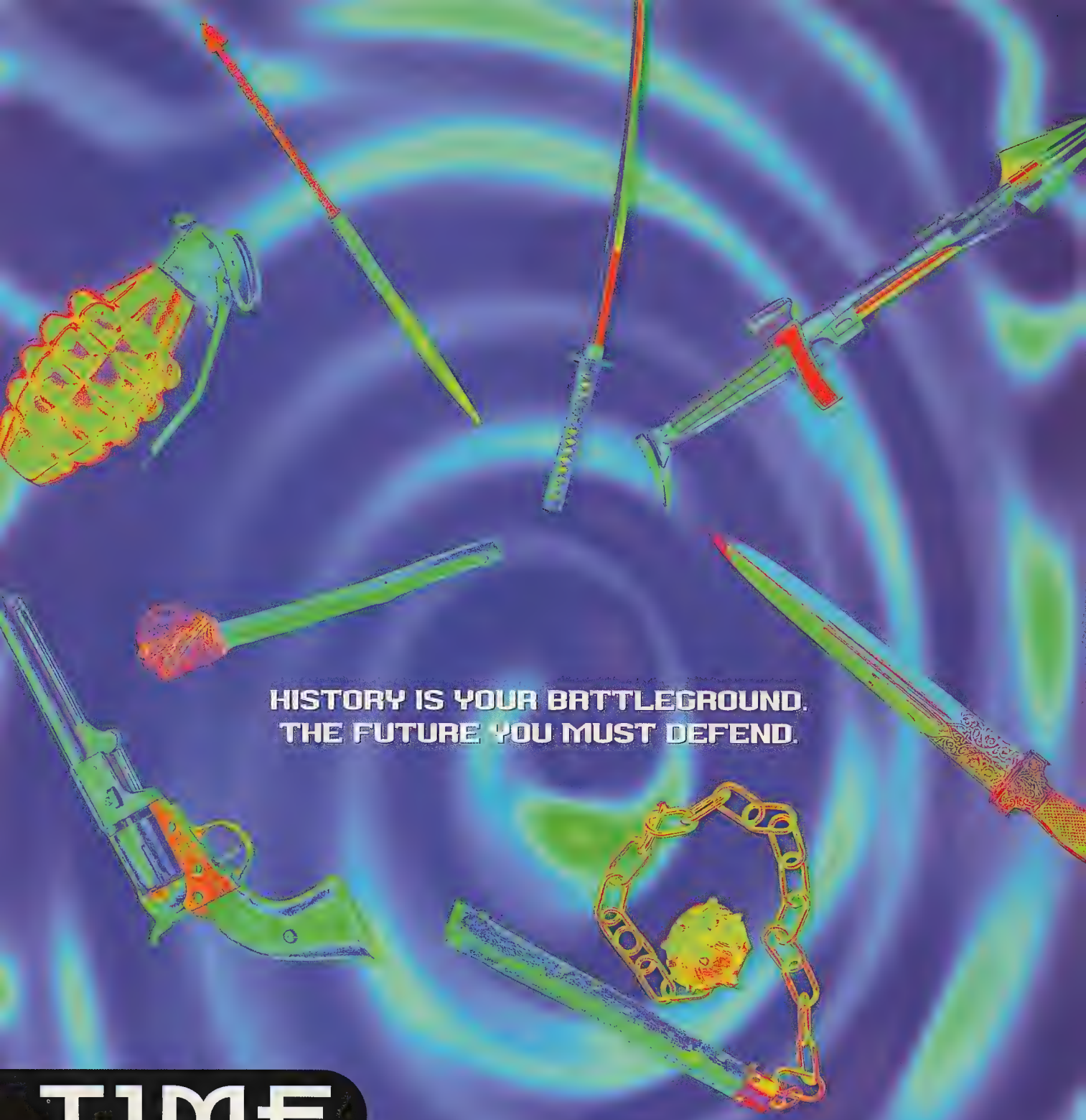
Your goal is to run postmortem paradise in the most efficient manner possible. Your raw materials are the souls of the recently deceased, each one equipped with a history of good or bad deeds and a set of beliefs. The job is then to deal with them according to some Divine Plan (your *own*, in fact). You can sanctify or damn the Heaven 'n' Hell crowd, recycle the reincarnation folks — and what to do with atheists and agnostics is anybody's guess.

IN THE BEGINNING,
you created the gates and the roads

Swaddled in a tuneful not-of-this-world score, *Afterlife* opens to the view of two barren planes of existence. One is traversed by blue waterways, the other sliced by angry rivers of fiery lava (which one do you suppose is Hell?) Why are they barren? Well, *you're* God, you tell *me*. Never mind, it's *my* article, I'll tell you. The planes are barren because your little divine universe has not yet processed any SOULs (Stuff Of Unending Life). Luckily, there is a little planet situated between the planes which ostensibly contains humanoid life forms that believe in an Afterlife.

If you create gates and some roads, the SOULs will drift toward one plane or another for processing (if you build it, they will come). Gates come in several varieties from the run of the mill Dante Gate to the snazzy but tasteful Prophecy Gate. Of course, which gate to choose will always be a matter of cost since in addition to juggling Life and Death, it's also necessary to turn a prophet...er profit...(negating image of Mohammed on a carousel).

Once the SOUL's sin/virtues have been tallied by the demonic/angelic caseworker, the gate opens, the SOUL walks through and a few pennies from heaven are tossed your way for *processing* the soul. I suppose it's a living.



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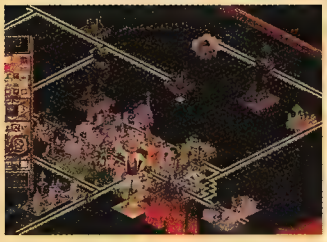
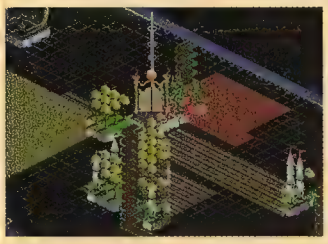
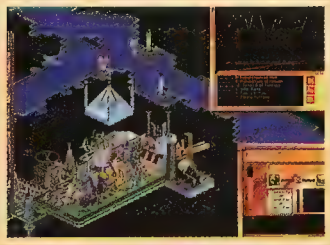


Branches of the new food franchise, ECOLI Hut, are springing up all over the city

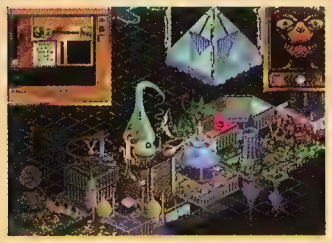


Something tells me we're not in Kansas anymore

A dollhouse? But where's Malibu Barbie and the dune buggy from Hell?



Charts and graphs for serious statisticians



Giant birthday cakes enhance the city skyline

The business of punishment and reward

Once you have a gate and some roads, it's time to go about the business of reward and punishment. This whole exalt-'em-or-damn-'em concept is treated as matter-of-factly as placing a couple of taxi stands in *Sim City*. It's early to tell whether or not the truly pious will be offended.

When a SOUL enters the Afterlife, it expects to be rewarded or punished based on its individual beliefs about the nature of the Afterlife experience. The rewarding and punishing take place in what are called Fate Structures. To build a Fate Structure, one must decide first which structure is desired, and then create zoning for that particular type of structure.

Not surprisingly, the variety of Fate Structures corresponds directly to the Seven Deadly Sins in punishment mode, and the Seven Cardinal Virtues in reward mode. I recognize these parallels right away thanks to still vivid elementary school memories of having had to memorize the Seven Deadly Sins and Seven Cardinal Virtues in case of a Deadly-Sin-Cardinal-Virtue pop quiz. For the luckily uninitiated, the Fate Structures are (in alphabetical order) the Avarice, Envy, Gluttony, Lust, Pride, Sloth and Wrath Punishments (imagine second-graders focused on whether or not they have committed Sloth...). On a more beatifying note, there are the Charity, Chastity, Contentment, Diligence, Humility, Peacefulness and Temperance Rewards.

For the good...

Fate Structures are decidedly by-design cute...For Peaceful SOULs there are Fishing Holes and Splerf Wars. Fishing Holes are serene waters where some come to meditate. Others gaze at them from their porches as they knit socks. Still others skip stones or do some fly fishing. Maybe there's even Bingo on Tuesday nights. And what about Splerf? Some time ago the angels invented a "wonder substance" called *splerf*, a laughter inducing foam by-product which can be shaped, molded, eaten or worn. The Peaceful SOULs of Heaven have taken to splerf with uncommon zeal, using it to make footballs, cars, teddy bears and amusing weapons with which they shoot each other for hours at a time.

DNA Parks are available to the Humble who, instead of worrying about DNA experiments gone awry, may instead spend many glorious hours putzing around with DNA, creating cows that give milkshakes, insects that spell words as they fly in formation, and purple dinosaurs that sing badly, then explode.

Additional rewards for Humility are Humble Pie, which in heaven tastes *good;* and Press Conferences, since in heaven, everyone wants to hear what the Humble have to say.

Valentine Town, a place where they never stop celebrating Valentine's Day (gag) is available for Virtuous SOULs, as is The Only Non-Sleazy Singles Bar in Creation

The bad...

The mildest punishment for Avaricious SOULs teaches them a somewhat grotesque lesson about greed. These structures, Jerky Cities, have demons who have rigged it so that everything a SOUL touches turns into processed meats. It's sort of a Midas touch gone wrong. The most valued items in the cities are those that no one has touched, but the greedy natures of the damned eventually get the better of them, so eventually everything enSPAMs, entongues or enheadcheeses (the simple verb "to enheadcheese" is eliminated from most elementary school curricula). There's nothing like the eau de rancid meat during extreme temperatures, and here, that would be every day. Yum!

Fabulous evil dollhouses are a must for some Pride sinners. In this humiliating punishment, the damned are shrunk down to the size of dolls and turned into the playthings of little nasty demon children. The doll houses come in many varieties, the most popular being the Maliboo Scream House (rimshot).

For SOULs of Envy, one structural possibility is the Amphitheater of Anguish. Whatever your least favorite form of entertainment or music, the Amphitheater of Anguish will be featuring it. Always. For all eternity.

And the ugly...

There seems to be no reference to the ugly in *Afterlife*. It's enough of a job to manage the good and the bad.

Won't you take me down, 'cause I'm goin' to...

Many SOULs believe in reincarnation, so it becomes your responsibility to make sure that they properly return to the planet. Reincarnation is accomplished by transporting SOULs through Karma Portals which hover in a plane halfway between Heaven and Hell.

Overheard on the lower plane last Friday:

"But how do I get the blasted SOULs *to* those hovering Karma Portals?"

"I'm glad you asked that question. You get the SOULs to the Karma Portals by way of Karma *Stations*" (which may be purchased for a modest fee, of course).

"But how do they get from the Karma Stations to the Karma Portals?"

"Well the answer is obvious. There must be some Karma Track to connect the Karma Stations to the Karma Portals."

"For a modest fee?"

"Of course. Overhead, don'tcha know. Consult your local Recar City, the friendly place for all of your reincarnation needs."

The features mentioned here represent only a tiny portion of what the final release will have to offer. There are many, many more tidbits which promise to offer enough diversity to make this a standout product. We haven't even *touched* upon Omnibolges and Love Domes...or Limbo Bars. But even with all of the bells and whistles, *Afterlife* was designed to be simple enough for the beginning sim player, but with enough sophistication for the hard-core empire builder. And the concept alone has *tons* of potential. Just remember when "playing God" was a euphemism — not any more.

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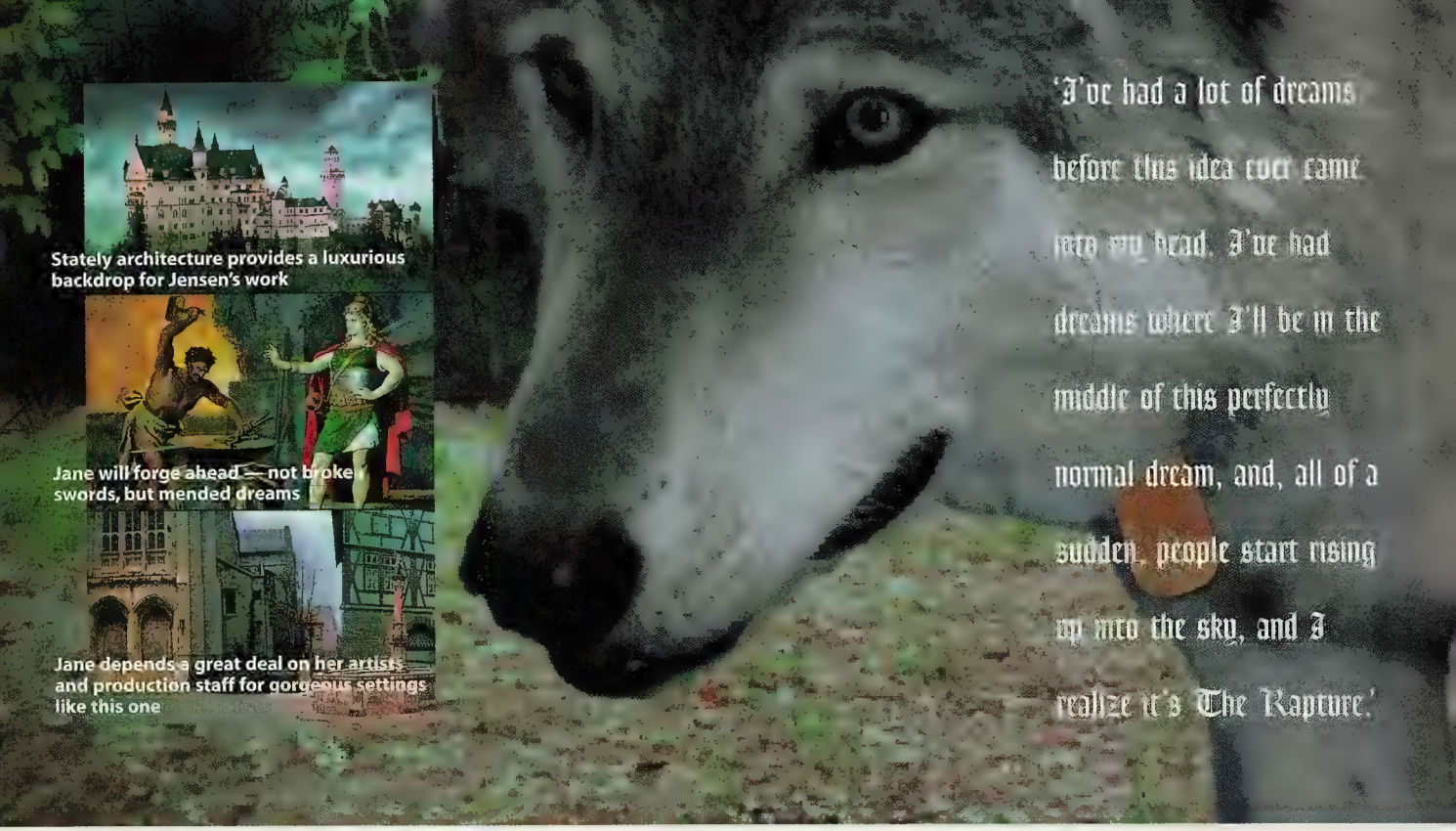
'I've had a lot of dreams before this idea ever came into my head. I've had dreams where I'll be in the middle of this perfectly normal dream, and, all of a sudden, people start rising up into the sky, and I realize it's The Rapture.'

Stately architecture provides a luxurious backdrop for Jensen's work

Jane will forge ahead — not broken swords, but mended dreams

Jane depends a great deal on her artists and production staff for gorgeous settings like this one

Jane Jensen's Rapture

Gabriel Knight's creator shares views on the past present and future of her work

By Brenda Garno

After completing her second* Gabriel Knight *adventure for Sierra, Jane Jensen set about to end the world . . . maybe, depending on how you play it.

Her latest creation, tentatively titled* Millennium, *is still in its early concept stages, but already seems to have the Jensen hallmark: wildly researched, full of mystery with an attention to the story's details and the facts that drive them.

As you talk to her about it, you can almost feel her eagerness. And, in this interview with* Computer Games Strategy Plus, *Jane talks about her designs— here and in the hereafter.

CGS+/Brenda Garno: *You're established now, especially with the success of The Beast Within, but how did you break into this business?*
Jane Jensen: Well, I applied to Sierra about six years ago after falling in love with their adventure games. At the time, I was a programmer for Hewlett Packard, and was trying to write novels on the side, but wasn't having a lot of luck getting them published. When I discovered adventure games, the first ones were *King's Quest IV* and *Manhunter*, I really fell in love with the genre and thought that would be a great use of my different skills. So, I applied to Sierra, and after about a year, I was hired as a staff writer and eventually had an opportunity to do design work.

Your designs actually go back before Gabriel Knight, *though.*
Yeah, I did the first *Ecoquest*, my first design. Then, after that, I worked with Roberta Williams on *Kings Quest VI*. Both of those games were thought to be decent material, so they offered me a chance to do my own *Gabriel Knight* series.

How do you approach designing a game when you're sitting there and staring at the blank screen?
Well, these projects take so long that usually in the middle of the production on one, I'm getting ideas for something new. Generally, I read a lot, watch a lot of documentaries, and read a lot of non-fiction. Usually, I'll find a concept where something I've read or been exposed to really strikes me, and it will trigger an idea for something. So, once I'm actually able, timewise, to work on the concept, it's been in my head for a while, and I'm eager to get rolling on it. To take it from a broad concept to a detailed product, I pretty much try to lock myself away. I stay home and just work with a huge, enormous pad of paper jotting down maps and ideas and a lot of times, I just make

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lists and lists of possible pros and cons or possible ways to go. There's generally *a lot* of research. Right now, I'm working on a new concept about the *Millennium*, sort of an apocalyptic story although it [the story] doesn't say exactly what is going on. [Pause] And I've found there are so many things that I need to research. I keep running up against brick walls. I need to know more about geology and physics and, you know, a lot of things. So, this period is kind of one where I get a couple ideas, then have to do some research, and then they trigger more concrete ideas. It goes back and forth.

I know Sierra's really into the "team" concept. Do you have a team helping you research everything you need to design a game?
I do not work with other designers or writers. I just feel like the most productive thing for me to shut myself up somewhere and wrestle with myself. I just have never, ever desired to work with another designer or writer. The plots that I do are pretty detailed, pretty in-depth. They are just so interwoven that, you know, it's not really something you could break up and let someone do a piece of. I just really prefer to do the work myself. Of course, I'm very dependent on people in my production staff, who are wonderful and very creative and very brilliant in their own right. They do the art, the music, directing and acting, and worry about all the production details. That is very important to me.

Do you ever just feel terrified by it, the whole scope of it? Putting a complete project like Millennium *together?*
Oh, all the time. Particularly in the middle of a design. It's a weird stress, because I generally have such a large idea in the beginning, like this particular one, *Millennium*. I know as I start getting ideas about what it is I want to do, that it's very large in scope. It's pretty intimidating, you know. I know what I really want to accomplish in terms of how it would impact people at the end, and here I am starting with nothing! To get from here to there, and to think about how much needs to be created, how much needs to be invented, how good it has to be or how good *I* want it to be. To think how good it would have to be to have the impact that I want it to have. Even thinking about production now, I'm more aware of what it really costs and what it really takes, and so that's intimidating, too. I think about how I really want to do this huge scene, yet I know that we're looking at another big hassle production-wise even after the story is written. Yeah, it's pretty difficult. All you can do is hold on to your end goal. One of the things that I do, actually, when I'm in this phase of a project, like with *The Beast Within*, I would take a long walk every day and while I'm doing that, I write reviews in my head of the end product. [Laughs] It may sound really egotistical, but what it really helps me to do is to focus on what I want people to come away with. Working on the *Beast Within* story, I was thinking about what I wanted people to say about it. It was really about the story, the characters, along those lines. I think it helped me to focus on what it was I was trying to do to achieve some of those things, whether or not someone ever figures out that I did. [Laughs] You just have to stay focused on the end goal.

For The Beast Within, *did you ever see any in magazines that were close to the reviews that you wrote in your head?*
Yeah, I think, as usual, you shoot for the stars and then you end up getting to the moon. I mean, the reviews have been wonderful for *Gabriel*. You know, as always, nothing is ever as earth-shattering as you would like it to be. But, that's kind of the way it is. You finally ship a product, and the world doesn't change. [Laughs] I guess I'll just have to do another one even better. That's part of the creative process.

Do you find it intimidating working with someone like Roberta Williams? Do people ever compare the two of you since you're both under the same proverbial roof?
No, I frequently have reporters or fans write to me and they want to compare. Everyone wants to compare. I think that's kind of silly. As far as I am concerned, Roberta and I are two authors at a publisher, and it's in both of our best interests for each one of us to do peak work. I mean, her work is nothing like my work, so I don't feel that there's

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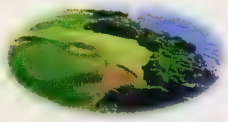

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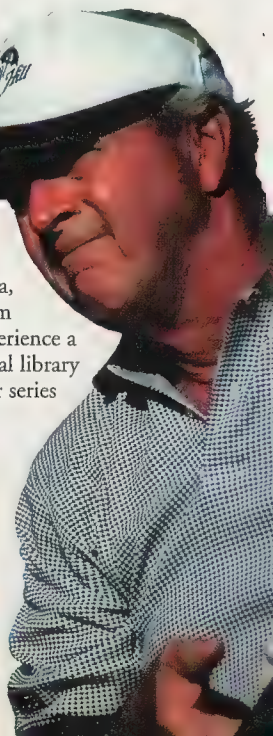

really any valid comparison. She will always do things that are just completely different from what I do, and I'm a very different writer than she is. I loved her stuff before I came to Sierra, and I still enjoy it. Yeah, we're just very, very different authors, and I don't feel we necessarily, probably, have the same audience. I guess at this point I feel like I'm well known enough in my own right, and I have people who really like my work and I don't feel . . . I mean certainly Roberta is one of the originals in the business and will always have a special place because of that, but I don't feel necessarily that I have to be intimidated by that.

Can you tell me a bit more about the Millennium *project? I know it's in the really early stages.*

Hmm. I think, ah, the *Gabriel Knight* series is basically a mystery series, and *Millennium* is very different in that it's *much* broader in scope. It's basically about a series of events that take place around the world. The main character and the player are not really sure if the events are a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, the end of the world is coming, or if they're being staged, or if it's just coincidence. There's just sort of this whole tension, I find. While I was working on *The Beast Within*, I picked up a book on Nostradamus and really got into the whole millennium idea. I was reading everything I could get my hands on for a year while I was trying to finish *Beast*, and knew I wanted to do a big millennium project. So, I've been actually waiting to write it, and I find the concept of it all very frightening.

You mean the concept of the millennium, the end of the world? Armageddon In the religious sense?

Because of my upbringing, which was really conservative fundamentalist Christian, I've rejected that for my own life, at least in that form, but yet, you know, because you're brainwashed with it from the time you're young, there's still some part of you who says, "Yeah, but what if they're right?" And that's fear. I think a lot of people have that fear, although we're in a completely rational world, and we don't believe in that kind of medieval mindset. But, you know, there's still that negative fear that if we really turn our mind to it and think about it, it makes us *really* uneasy. If anything were ever to happen . . . I've had a lot of dreams before this idea ever came into my head. I've had dreams where I'll be in the middle of this perfectly normal dream, and, all of a sudden, people start rising up into the sky, and I realize it's The Rapture or something. I get *so* scared. I think anyone who's been exposed to the ideas has that fear, and if they were ever walking down the street and the moon turned red, you know, they would immediately say, "Oh my God . . . it's the apocalypse." I think that's really frightening. Also, I've been examining apocalyptic beliefs of a lot different cultures, and it's really fascinating. I think there's a lot of really neat emotional issues there and, I think, a lot of guilt about what we may or may not deserve. People, I think, are very mindful of environmental issues, animal rights, a lot of issues which we may not even consciously choose to deal with in our own lives, yet we have this guilt. So, I think that's basically some of the concepts that I am trying to play with in this new project. It's very large in scale and scope.

From a writer's standpoint, it's interesting that you're researching and diving into a project that genuinely scares you. Hopefully, you'll be able to carry that across to the player while playing off their own inner fears as well.

Well, that's pretty much they way I approach all my work. With *The Beast Within*, I had sort of looked into Ludwig while I was living in Germany, a few years ago. He just very much moved me. I was really fascinated by his castles and his life. I pretty much try for all my work to at least start with and bring into it things that truly fascinate me. First of all, I'm not very interested in writing about it if I'm not really moved or emotionally driven by the concept. I don't have it, then the audience isn't going to have it. So, I kind of see my job, actually, as really being open to explore the world and learn everything I can, go to different places and find things that are really incredible that way and bring them to the audience. ■

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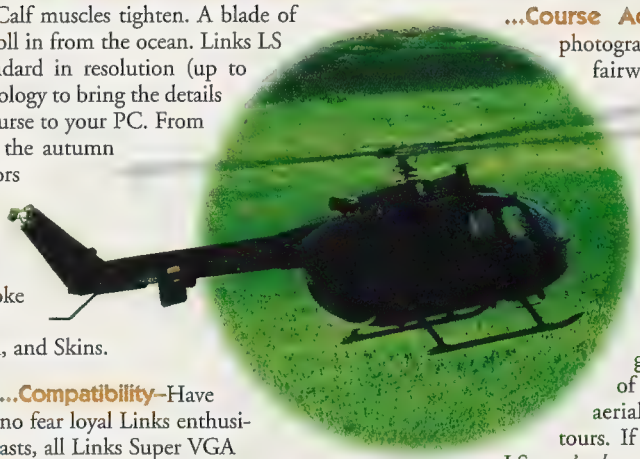

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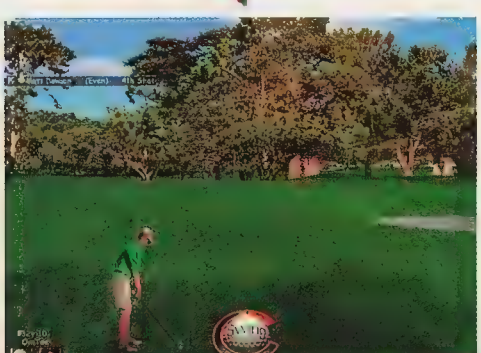

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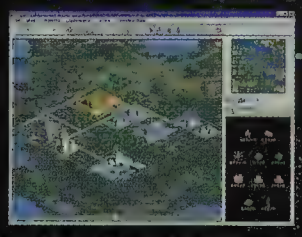

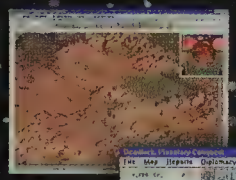

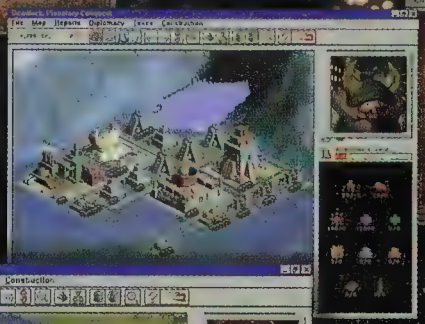

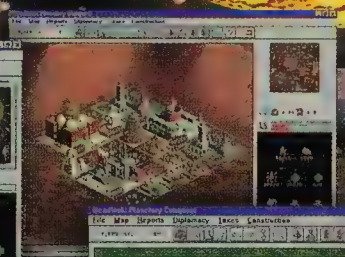

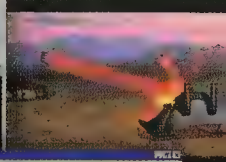

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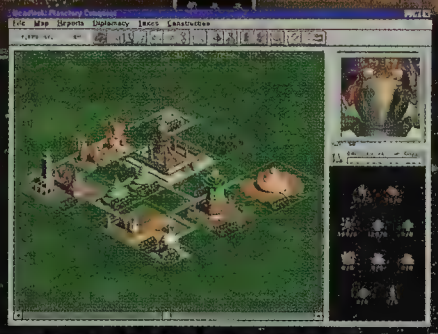

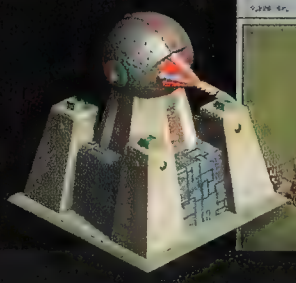

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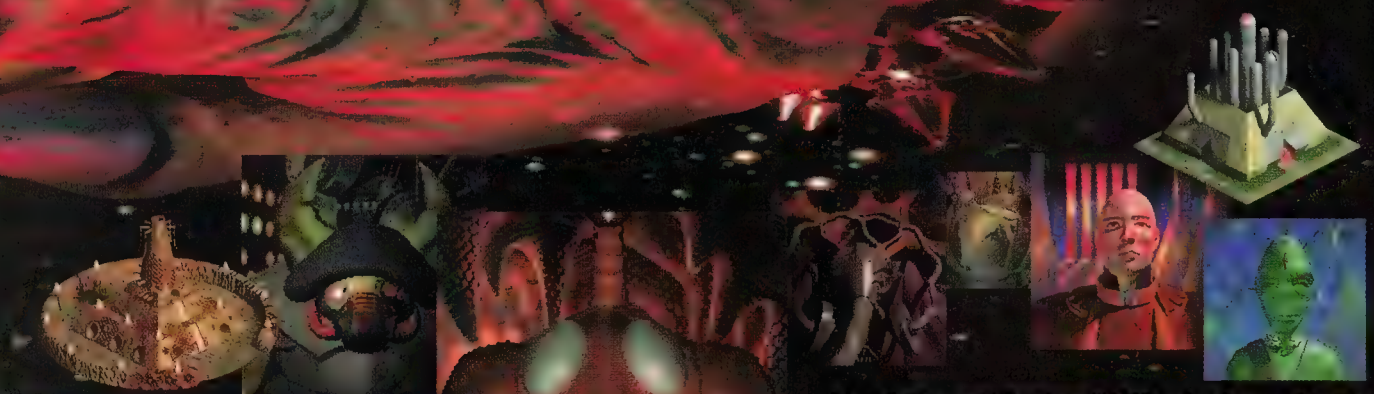

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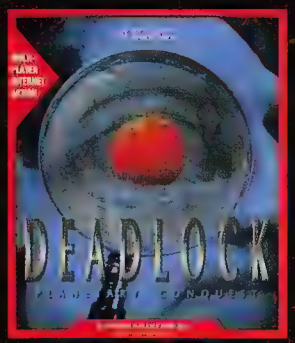

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The story of the *EarthSiege* universe is a familiar one to sci-fi readers: machines, built to do man's bidding, are built a tad bit too smart and independent and decide to perform some house cleaning on Earth and its colonies. While much of the conflict in *EarthSiege* and *EarthSiege 2* takes place on old Terra itself, the conflict portrayed in *CyberStorm* takes place farther into the future (beyond even the time of *EarthSiege 3*), when the Cybrid menace has spread out to the stars. You start out as a junior officer out to prove him or herself to a corporation charged with fighting the Cybrids; with your two light Hercs and their Bioderm pilots (more on Bioderms below), you work your way through a series of missions across multiple moons, planets, and even into other star systems. With each success you gain experience, prestige and, perhaps most importantly for your continued efforts, credits with which you can expand the numbers and quality of your forces.

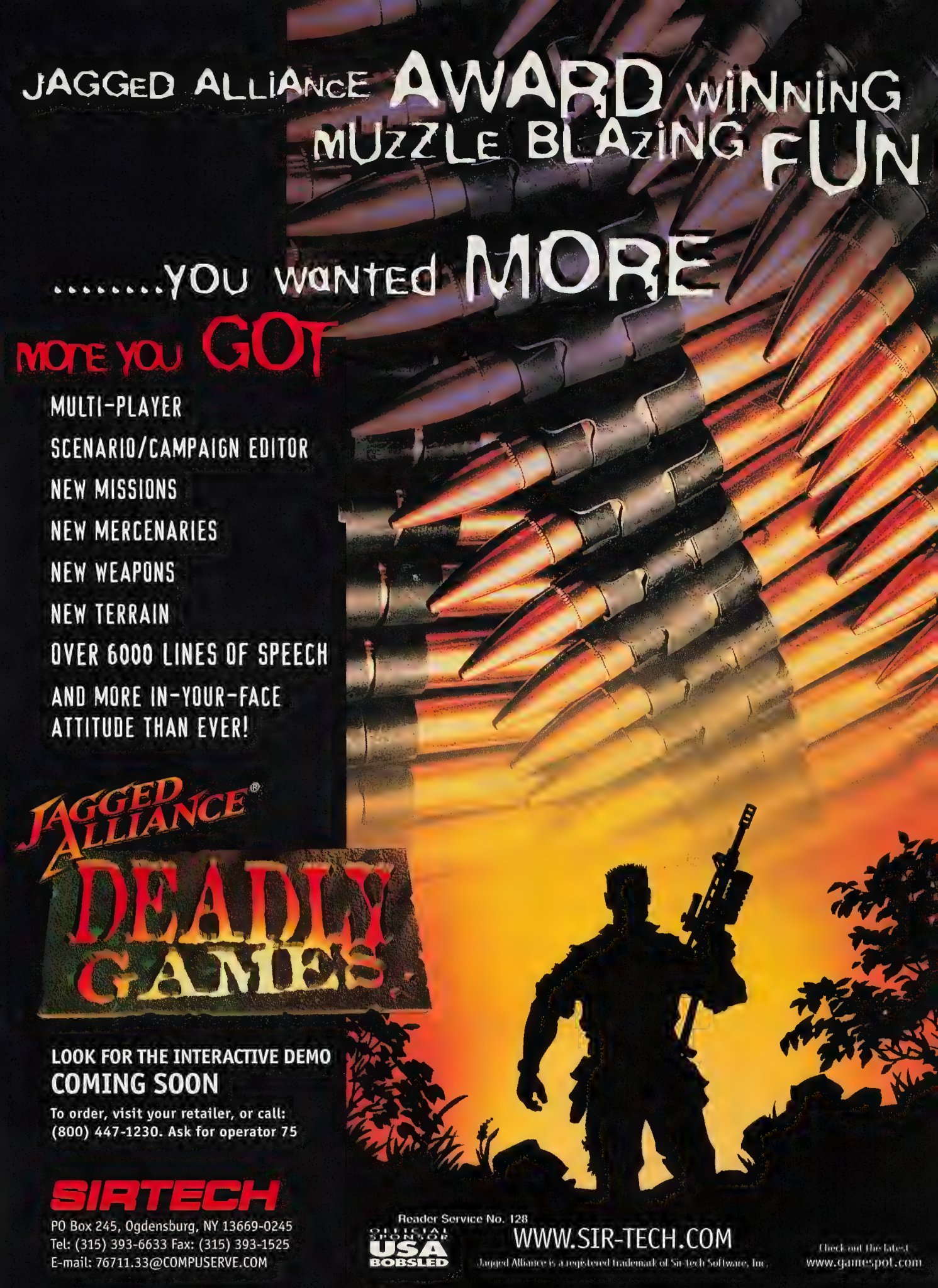
Part of your Herc force just after landing. Note the incredible detail on each Herc, the Carrier, and the surrounding terrain

You conduct your varied operations from a centralized corporate base: buy and outfit Hercs; create, heal, and/or train their Bioderm pilots; and coordinate your missions through the communications facility. After preparing your forces for battle you select a mission based on your current capabilities and needs: while the corporation may have already identified the central Cybrid base in the current system, you may want to take some easier missions like ore gathering or reconn runs in order to both gain experience and build up credits in your own operational fund. Be careful, though–dither around with easy missions for too long and the Cybrid forces in your system will become overwhelming. One of the many crucial decisions in the game will be when to risk your forces going after the big targets.

Instead of directing a small squad of Hercs from the cockpit of your own battle machine as in *EarthSiege*, you are now controlling a much larger unit (some sources say up to 26 Hercs, but we'll have to wait for final to see what your maximum force will be) from an overhead map view. Being a mech game means you'd better have hardware, and it looks like we'll have it in plenty here. From the very preliminary manual I counted eight Herc chassis that will be available to you (if you ever get enough credits), on which you can mix and match a huge variety of techie goodies. For example, on the Demon (one of the heavier Hercs) you'll be able to choose from 15 different energy weapons, 14 missile types, 9 plasma systems, 6 ELF weapons, and 8 pieces of advanced technology... and oh yeah–a 260mm Auto Mortar (yeow!). Of course, these kinds of capabilities won't be until later in the game, when both the tech level and your credit rating have grown into the stratosphere. Other types of Hercs include light scouts and escorts; your bulwark Intruder class Hercs the Ogre and the Giant; the previously mentioned heavies like the Demon and Apocalypse; and command vehicles like the Sensei (for Bioderms with Command training).

Bioderms are the quasi-biological creatures you "buy" to control your Hercs. Based on the genetic templates of famous human Herc warriors from the past, these beings are heavily modified to be the ultimate warriors, keeping the battle-oriented strengths of the originals while removing most of their humanity. Bioderm templates range from generic Model 001s on up to those based on famous heroes of past anti-Cybrid actions; the better the skill set of a particular template, the more it'll cost to "press" a new Bioderm from it, with the top-notch, highly skilled templates commanding vast sums. Once a Bioderm is created (grown? built?), you link it into the systems of a particular Herc in your arsenal; there it will stay until killed, moved to another Herc, or sent back to the vats of basic biologic material. While you do work with these Bioderms between missions, healing them and putting them through training, you'll have to pay close attention to them on the battlefield. While you can get a working Bioderm faster than raising and training a "true" human pilot, it comes at a cost–Bioderms are genetically unstable and their "cohesion" can degrade quickly during battle. Likewise, their health and aggressiveness can drop, but both can be bumped up with drugs (at the risk of increasing their genetic instability and potentially pushing them over the edge). An out-of-control Bioderm may refuse orders or even turn against its allies; a dead 'derm will leave its Herc immobile and largely defenseless.

I've barely touched the basics of the game's background, let alone the depths of gameplay itself. While certainly too early to say for sure (after all, we all remember *Outpost*, don't we?), it certainly looks like *CyberStorm* holds great promise; I can say that even in its alpha form we've enjoyed the game already, missing components and all! ■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by Scott Udell

Conquer the stars in this space-based continuation of SSI's Five Star series

Star General

Okay, so you've pounded the heck out of the Allies in *Panzer General*, reciprocated the pounding in *Allied General*, and even carried your metaphoric fist-fight into other-realms in *Fantasy General*. What could possibly be left? Well, gee, I guess that's a no-brainer: put your metaphor into the pocket of your space suit, jump into your hyper-light capable cruiser, and carry your generalship to the stars with *Star General*, the fourth game in SSI's *Five Star* series.

Set in the universe popularized by *The Fleet* series of novels, *Star General* will put you in charge of The Fleet, a force of ships and marines formed by the multi-racial Alliance of Worlds to protect free space from a variety of enemies and raiders – remnants of a malignant, Earth-centric empire.

A battle in space, Star General-style

New to the *Five Star* series is the two-level combat scheme: you can either conduct strategic battles in space, using some 90 rendered ships, or drop the fight down to an on-planet tactical level for some down-and-dirty ground-pounding, using *hundreds* of unit types.

The jewels of conquest, Earth-like worlds will be your most sought-after planets

Generalship is no longer your only focus; now you'll have to be concerned with other aspects of empire development as well. As you conquer enemy planets you will want to manage their various facilities – factories, research centers, military complexes, and orbital stations – carefully, to support your war efforts effectively. As you'd expect, technology plays a part in the game, although perhaps to a simpler degree than other games in this genre: all we know for sure at this point is that there will be six tech levels. Of course, game play isn't all new; you will still have pre-designed scenarios and campaigns to work through in the classic *Panzer General* style of play.

Multi-player network and head-to-head modem play will let you carry the fight to a friend's computer, playing one of the six alien cultures opposing The Fleet: the feline-like Hressan, graceful and deadly; the insectoid Xritra; technically sophisticated Cephians; savage Khanlians; despotic Schleinal, fallen into decadence; and the xenophobic Dragonians (gotta have some kind of "onians" in a space opera game).

According to the developer Catware's web page (http://www.catware.com), the game will feature timed scenarios for that extra bit of added pressure; we don't know how this will be implemented, as the alpha we've seen mostly shows off the interface and not gameplay. Catware is also promising "enhanced AI for all of the Races in the game" – a significant achievement in a series that many consider to have good AI already.

Graphics in the game will be in SVGA, and will feature traditional overhead views in the familiar *General* style, rendered 3-D animations, and a wealth of 2-D science fiction artwork. As you can see from the screen shots, detailed star fields will provide a colorful backdrop to your fleet-based actions, while your ground actions will be fought out across multiple planet types (ranging from airless moons to Venusian-like pressure cookers, to fertile Earth-like planets). Some of the planetary artwork is particularly impressive, and looks like it could bring the *Five Star* series to a new visual high.

The interface will be changed somewhat from the earlier games, with a new, split map/control screen feature, but free-scrolling will be back. A Windows 95 version of the game is a definite, and will use Microsoft's DirectX technology for speedy graphics performance; SSI tells us that a DOS version of the game is still under consideration. Development is proceeding at a faster-than-anticipated clip, so it sounds likely that the game will be reaching stores on-schedule (sometime this Fall). ■

Transports will let you carry the fight from the stars to the ground

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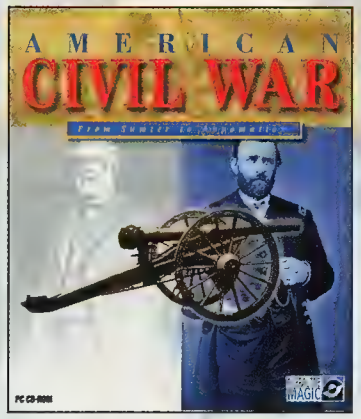

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by Scott Udell

The Settlers II: Veni Vidi Vici

Be a King (or Queen) with the Serf City Sequel

Back in 1994, a nice little game crept onto the U.S. gaming scene and, unfortunately, got hardly any notice. *Serf City: Life is Feudal* was its American incarnation (known as *The Settlers* in Europe), and it seems like we might have missed something; after all, a game that sells over 300,000 copies worldwide must have something going for it. Luckily for us, Blue Byte (the game's original developers; it was released in the U.S. by SSI) have decided to follow up with an improved and expanded version of their "SimKingdom" game.

The basic premise behind the game is that you take your hardy band of followers, plunk them down, and build up a kingdom from those humble beginnings. Okay, I can hear you groaning, "Not another *Civ* clone!" Don't worry: while at first blush it may sound like we'll be *Civ*ing again with *Settlers II*, we're not; instead the scale really is closer to that of *SimCity*, although even that's not a fair comparison, as the focus is different. With *Settlers II* you are much more concerned about the day-to-day issues of survival – food, shelter, and the like – than you are about proper zoning and city councils. You *do* worry about growth of your founding from its humble beginnings as a small village, but this is not the entire focus; you also play a direct role in the lives of your serfs, from managing what they build to where they look for raw goods to sending them out to meet the forces of enemies at your frontiers.

Instead of purposeless Sims represented only by digits, the Settlers (or Serfs, using the original game's nomenclature) each have their own duties to perform in the game, all of which will mesh together to increase the growth of your empire. Each Settler has its own type of housing; for example, a hunter lives in a huntsman's cottage, which should be placed near undeveloped areas instead of in the middle of your growing town. A miner works in a mine, but you can't plunk down a mine any ol' place; instead, you must use your geologist to scout out mineral deposits of various types (iron, gold, coal, etc.) and put your mine there. *Settlers II* has over 30 different types of Settlers; new types include scouts, innkeepers, hunters, donkey breeders, and ship builders.

Of course, if you want your village to grow into a mighty city you can't just plop down buildings and Settlers willy-nilly–you must plan things out according to the space and resources you have available. You have to plan pathways and roads for your settlers to move goods between buildings; an improvement over the original game gives us donkeys and seafaring to both speed transport (to keep the game from bogging down) and to provide more variety in gameplay.

Like all kings and queens seem to, you'll eventually find there's just not enough room in your tiny corner of the world, so it'll be time to go out for a bit of exploration and conquest. You can now send scouts out to uncover the new territories and, when they meet up with folks not interested in providing you with new real estate, you can send out up to six different types of soldiers (including chariots) to evict them. Of course, they might be eyeing your land as well, but you'll be able to protect your faithful subjects with barracks, guard towers, and catapults.

The game now has four distinct cultures you can play as: Romans, Vikings, Asians, and Nubians. Each culture will not only have its own architectural style, they will each also have their own characteristics. Levels of play in the game are now mission based, and gamers will be guided through the ten "chapters" of play via an underlying story-line (and, we can assume, a variety of nicely rendered cut-scenes). You'll now expand your empire across different types of terrain, including forest, lava, desert, and moors. Graphics are in SVGA and can be run in resolutions up to 1280x1024 if your hardware can handle it; on a 17" monitor at 1024x768 even the preliminary graphics look very nice. The interface is Windows-based and, while not finished in the beta we looked at, it looks like it will be fairly easy to use. Blue Byte is promising a stronger AI than the original game, but just in case a computer opponent will never satisfy you, you'll be able to play against a human (and, for spice, up to five computer opponents) at the same computer.

All in all, *Settlers II* looks like a substantial improvement on an already excellent gaming system. Careful attention has been paid to improving the weak spots in interface and path resolution, and everything else has been expanded appropriately for the scope of the game. We look forward to seeing final.

◀ Eventually your empire will start rubbing shoulders with those of other cultures

The Settlers II will feature many different kinds of architecture ▶

New in Settlers II, seafaring will let your subjects expand your realm to new lands across the oceans ▶

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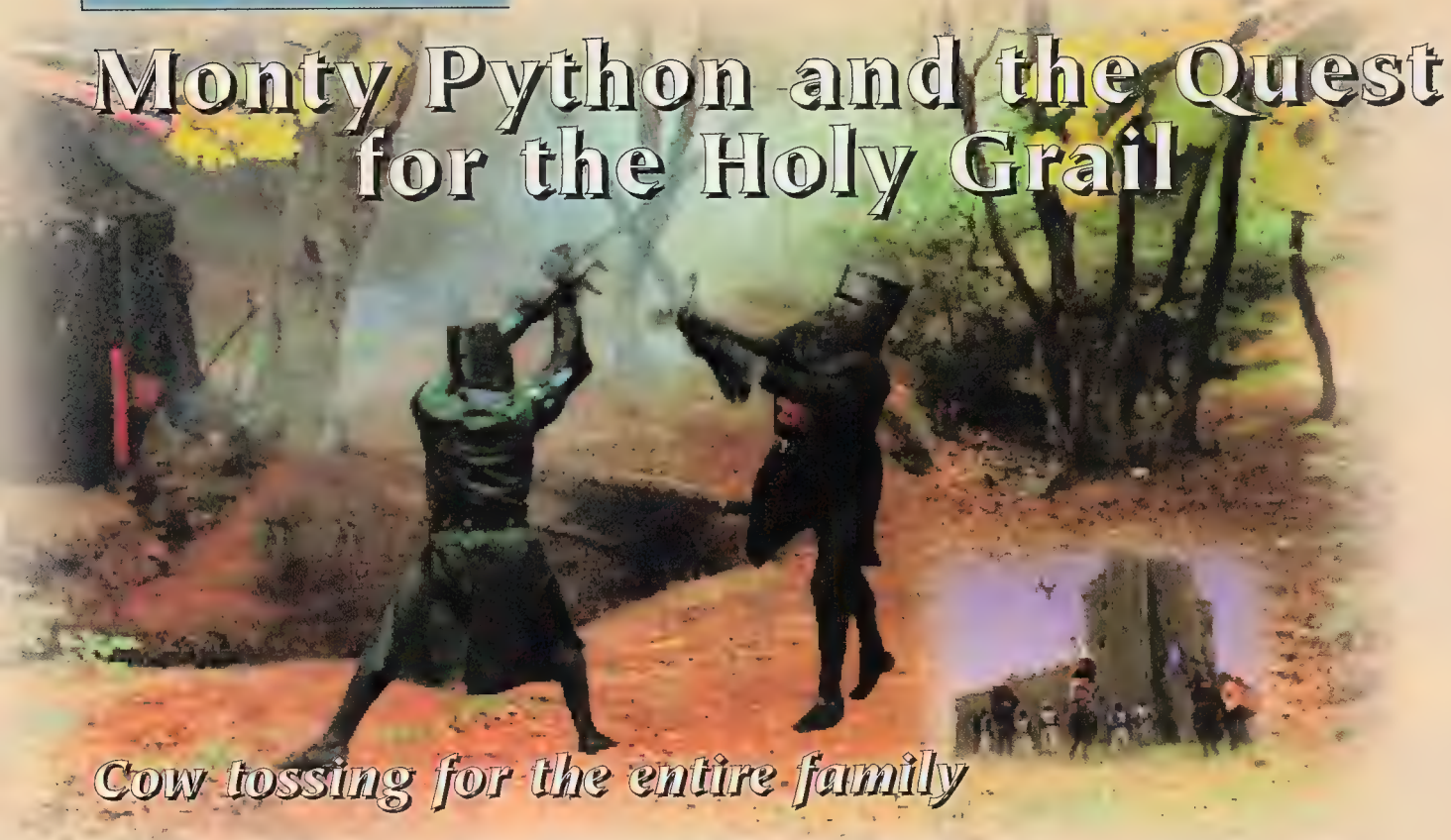
by Cindy Yans

Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail



Cow tossing for the entire family

In medieval Christian legend, the dish or cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper was supposed to have supernatural powers. Together with the spear with which he was wounded at the Crucifixion, it was an object of quest by King Arthur's knights in certain stories incorporated in the Arthurian legend. According to one story, the blood of Jesus was collected in the Holy Grail by Joseph of Arimathaea at the Crucifixion, and he brought it to Britain where he allegedly built the first church, at Glastonbury. At least three churches in Europe possess vessels claimed to be the Holy Grail.

The legend of the Grail had been steeped in religious tradition...until the irreverent Monty Python folks got hold of it. 7th Level hit the jackpot with *Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time* — at least according to Python fans. And now so that we may waste even more of our time, they offer us the holy of holies, *Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail.* When it comes to holy, Monty Python is way up there. And when it comes to Grails, well, they bring us the holiest — unless they've been fooling us lo these many years since the release of the film of the same name.

King Arthur and his hardy band of Knights will be set loose in your living room, or wherever your computer setup happens to be (a laptop in the bathroom seems somehow appropriate). The player will fight monsters, burn witches, argue with disgruntled peasants and chat with the Lord God Himself, reliving moments from the classic film. Various escapades, puzzles and Unknown Entities await the player down every road — each designed to test one's skill, imagination and pain threshold. Feel the pain.

The game features Terry Gilliam's animation from the original film, new illustrations and animation, a great deal of film footage and a moose. Along with Gilliam, Python members Eric Idle, Michael Palin and Terry Jones have provided newly recorded voice material. Idle, having drawn the short straw, will serve as the game's executive co-producer. Says Idle of the entire experience, "Blimey blimey I'm an Englishman! Let us take some tea and scones and watch a game of cricket!" Idle went on to add, "I see once again 7th Level has hired some incompetent second-rate bastard to write quotes for me."

It's England, 932 AD and the Lord God Himself has charged King Arthur with finding the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail, after rolling off Da Vinci's table during the Last Fracas, spent a while moonlighting as a beer stein. After years of ale embracing and several weekends with Indiana Jones, it apparently snuck off to join the circus. This is where you come in. That's right. It's up to you to find the Grail. They apparently chose you since the Grail must be sought only by the free-from-sin-and-pure-of-heart. Should you succeed, you will be rewarded with the original film script's top-secret "King Brian the Wild" scene, which has never been seen performed anywhere else in the world, and which contains a feast of top-secret, original animation, likewise never performed anywhere else in the world.

Clopping coconuts clank as you ride with Arthur and his trusty servant Patsy through fifteen rendered interactive scenes, rounding up Lancelot, Galahad and all the other knights of the Round table whose names nobody can ever remember. The game will even include the premiere of some Pythonesque arcade games reminiscent of the ones from *Complete Waste of Time.* What Arthurian game would be complete without Drop Dead, Catch the Cow and Burn the Witch? Not to mention Spank the Virgin? The player will also have the opportunity to slice the Black Knight into pieces...before dinner even...and rub elbows with the likes of the lovely and talented Bridgekeeper of Death, Tim the Enchanter, the Three Headed Knight and the Sex-Starved Ladies of Castle Anthrax.

For Python fans, and there are many of us, this is a title to which we look forward. We are promised boundless comedy and even the ability to ignore the main objective to participate: "You don't have to play the strategy game to enjoy foul pestilence, rude Frenchmen, lavish song and dance routines and many wonderful chances to suffer a vile, painful death, as you actually become a player in all of your favorite bits from the film." What? Don't have to play the game? Forget the gaaaaame. Who cares about the Grail, right? Well, maybe that circus owner...

AND ON THE 8TH DAY, HE SPLIT TO MAUI, AND LEFT YOU IN CHARGE.

Don't forget to feed the fish.

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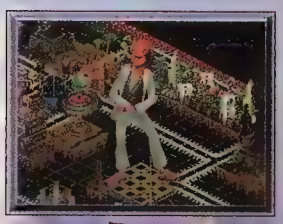

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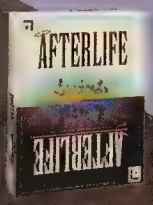

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Sid Meier's Civilization II

Microprose	
Enhanced Review	Windows

★★★★★

Back in the old days it seemed like every game did something that no one had seen before. Nowadays, it's becoming more and more difficult to deliver the same sort of transcendent game experience, one that makes you think, "Wow, I never thought I'd ever be able to do this" or "this is a good reason to own a computer." Much innovation today is on the technical side of things, and since technology moves so quickly in this business, tomorrow we forget the advances of today. Good design, though, is timeless, but nowadays it's almost as if the well has run dry on original game design.

When a transcendent design arrives, as it did back in 1991 when Sid Meier and Bruce Shelley created *Civilization*, the result is twofold. First off, gamers are suddenly awakened to new possibilities of what the computer can do. Secondly, it inspires countless imitations and the inevitable sequels. We've already suffered through the imitation phase (and they still trickle in from time-to-time), and we've finally entered the sequel phase with *Sid Meier's Civilization II*.

Civilization II is an evolutionary advance. The basic premise remains the same. You're the ruler at the dawn of your civilization, and through your management, controlled growth and exploration, you determine the fate of your civilization. Will you concentrate on military production and attempt to conquer opposing civilizations or build an economic and technological powerhouse and try to make it to space first? The real beauty of *Civilization*, and this sequel, is that these two approaches yield two completely different games.

Initial games, especially on the easiest levels, do not adequately portray the sheer volume of improvements this game has. Gamers will be shocked to find out that most of the strategies that they've developed over the years for *Civilization* no longer work. The improved diplomacy, for example, forces the player to establish diplomatic ties with as many civilizations as possible as you'll need them as the game progresses. You can no longer attack a country, take over a couple of cities, and then make peace and expect them to forgive and forget. They'll make a treaty with you, as most of the civilizations work toward peace now rather than war.

The governments have been refined as well. Despotism is much worse than it was

[1] The advisors – pretty much useless, though fans of the King may get a chuckle from the attitude advisor
[2] The alpine units gets EXTREME
[3] An up close and personal look at a settler unit
[4] Here's a city with all of the wonders and improvements

before, so monarchy is a key early advance. A new government type has been added, fundamentalism, and it will be the favorite of every military aggressor type. It eliminates unrest, you can build a new unit, fanatics and the limits on how many units you can have out in the fields versus at home is virtually meaningless. Like all *Civilization* features, it sounds great on paper, until you realize that it cuts your scientific research a whopping 50%. If you want a good laugh, try changing from fundamentalism directly to democracy. It's a riot (ouch).

War, though, is not the cut and dry decision it used to be. You have be prepared to change your plans once you've made the decision. It's all about balance, as this game better than any straddles the line between war and peace. You will need to fight, but avoiding it at all costs is the best policy, at least until you've built up a big enough arsenal to defeat all of your foes. If you do choose to go for it and wage an all-out war, expect the computer to make as many alliances as possible, try to bribe you units and do whatever it takes to fend off your attack.

If you're out in front, either economically, technologically or militarily, you can expect the computer opponents to behave differently toward you. The allies will become jealous of your success and start to pester you for technology. They will also start to gang up on you, and depending on your own reputation in dealing with other countries, may start doing nasty things to you. Likewise, if you're struggling, allies may be benevolent toward you and actually give you technology in an attempt to bolster their own position by building you up. After all, it's better to have strong allies, but how strong do you want them to get?

The included map editor allows users to created an unlimited number of worlds. When combined with the cheat mode (which is amazingly enough on the regular game menu at all times), gamers can create their own scenarios. The tiles used for the terrain and units are in a readable file format, and most of the parameters of the game are included in standard text files. This should guarantee plenty of repeat play for the game (as if that was a problem with the original).

There are a few rooms for improvement. The advice given by your advisors is fairly useless, as they always say they need more money or tell you that you're doing great. This may in part be due to the use of video to represent them, thereby limiting the number of responses to whatever was filmed, rather than allowing a full range of potential responses. Of course the Elvis advisor is moderately amusing, though the impersonator is fairly weak. They should have consulted the Las Vegas directory for quality Elvis impersonators.

The new isometric perspective is occasionally too clever for its own good. The air units, for example, look like they're sitting on the square directly above them, and more than a few times you may find yourself trying to

attack something and missing it because you misjudged exactly what square it was occupying. Overall, the graphics are OK, but not on the level of an *Outpost* (don't laugh – the game may have been a bust, but it was pretty). The new cut scenes for the wonders are quite spectacular to look at, but they play back slow enough that most players will probably turn them off.

There will be many who will scream loudly about *Civilization II*'s lack of multi-player play. Those who choose to not purchase it will be the losers here, as the hours and hours of play for a single game wouldn't make *Civilization II* a prime multi-player game. Of course it could be more fun against other humans, but then again is any game worse in multi-player mode?

While Sid Meier isn't actually involved in the design of *Civilization II* (the 200 page manual features an excellent design notes by *Civ II* designer Brian Reynolds), it still retains that *Civilization* flavor. Lord knows what would have happened if Reynolds had chosen to change too much. He has managed to retain that essential *Civ*ness to it all, while actually expanding its breadth and scope. Even *SimCity 2000*, perhaps the blueprint of how to do a sequel right, didn't do this good a job. It could be fascinating to see what Reynolds does for an encore, just as every design that Sid Meier works on is eagerly awaited.

When you're thinking about game ratings, *Civilization* would generally be regarded as the high-water mark when reviewing strategy games. It is the "five-star" game, the "100%" the "thumbs-up," whatever. *Civilization II* is the new standard because, as good as *Civilization* is, this is better. In every respect. If we had a rating higher than five stars then this would get it.

It would be possible to go on and on about how good *Civilization II* is, and all of the features that are improved, and why it may very well be the best strategy game ever created, and hell, perhaps the best game on the planet today, but it's going to start getting embarrassing very soon. Folks, this is as close to design perfection as it gets. Play and be awed. Play some more and be even more awed. It's hard to say how long it will take till that sense of "wow, they actually included that" wears off. If it's anything like *Civilization*, it may never go away. This is as good as gaming gets. —*Steve Bauman*

REVIEW RATINGS

a classic, beyond superb	★★★★★
excellent, superb, yowza	★★★★☆
average, but worth a look	★★★☆☆
the demo is all you need	★★☆☆☆
why?	★☆☆☆☆

Ratings are assigned by the author of the article.

ENHANCED VERSION OF REVIEW ON CD

Warlordy wonderland

Fantasy General

SSI

Enhanced Review | DOS

★★★☆☆

Overall, *Fantasy General* is fairly entertaining, although it may suffer when it comes to long-term replayability. There's nothing outstandingly original here, just a nice reworking of a solid system. The historical and gamescale complaints some had about the earlier two titles in the Five Star series don't apply here, so players can focus on the game itself. If you're a fan of the other games, you'll definitely want to consider *Fantasy General*. Other strategy fans looking for a new diversion with a strong beer 'n' pretzels wargame feel may also want to check it out.

Chess Mentor

Aficionado

Enhanced Review | Windows

★★★★½

Recently the Gary Kasparov match against IBM's chess monster *Deep Blue* renewed interest in computer chess programs. Though there are dozens of commercial programs that play a superior game of chess, very few provide an effective tutorial system to actually improve play. *Chess Mentor* is an extremely successful attempt to fill this void. The program provides beginning to advanced lessons written by nationally respected chess coaches. Aficionado's "Learning Engine" algorithm tracks the concepts with which the player is having difficulty and automatically structures its challenges to address those weaknesses. Though pricey at $120.00, *Chess Mentor* is the best learning tool we've seen to actually help a chess player improve their play.

Angel Devoid: Face of the Enemy

Mindscape

Enhanced Review | DOS

★½☆☆☆

You're Angel Devoid — or are you? Mindscape and Electric Dreams present an amazingly uneven production in the cyber-space thriller genre. *Angel Devoid: Face of the Enemy* is, in the tradition of *Dragon's Lair*, a sequence-based experience where you finally find out that you must execute "Right-Forward-Forward-Right-Shoot" after having executed several permutations of "Right-Forward-Right-Die" and "Left-Forward-Die." Slick graphics and great special effects don't quite overcome the lack of puzzle development and general gameplay tedium. Although the storyline has *excellent* potential, in execution it simply doesn't pan out. It's hard to decide whether that is the fault of the writers, the actors or both. If you enjoy games solely on the basis of spectacular special effects, you might want to try this. Otherwise, *Angel's* somewhat devoid of excellence.

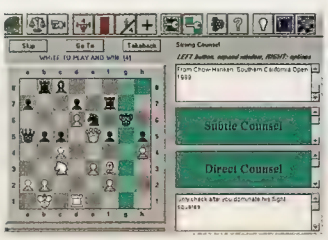
Kingdom O' Magic

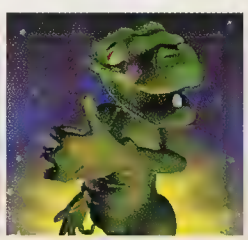
SCI

Enhanced Review | DOS

★★★★☆

For a good laugh, check out what happens when testing your partner's Babinski reflex... Or, purchase *Kingdom O'Magic* from SCI. Step into a world of the universally bizarre. A non-traditional traditional adventure with somewhat primitive but completely delightful rendered graphics, *Kingdom O' Magic* offers three quests which the player may choose in any order. Conjoined at their subquests, the stories offer limited replayability, and one of the two playable main characters could have used a dialog coach. Most of the rest of the





Chess Mentor; Angel DeVoid; Kingdom O' Magic

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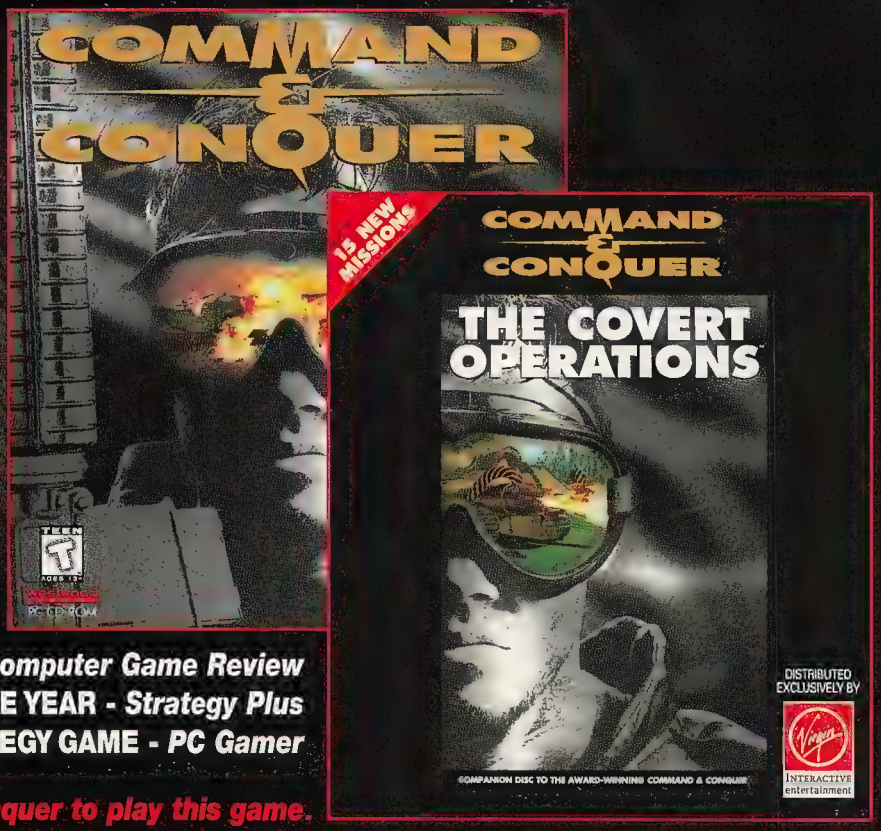

1995 GAME OF THE YEAR - *Computer Game Review*
1995 GAME OF THE YEAR - *Strategy Plus*
BEST STRATEGY GAME - *PC Gamer*

You must own Command & Conquer to play this game.

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Reader Service No. 160

fine characterizations are an exercise in the truly outlandish, however; and the outrageous dialog and situational humor shine though, making this one of the funniest games in recent memory — a Fratistat O'Fun!

Spycraft: The Great Game

Activision

Enhanced Review | Windows 95, DOS

★★★★☆

Occupying that middle ground somewhere between the tedium of Police Quest and the fantasy of James Bond is Activision's *Spycraft: The Great Game*. At times it actually approaches that pretentious billing, suggesting what could happen if Tom Clancy ever decided to design an adventure game. With puzzles that vary from recreating a bullet trajectory to doctoring a photo to interrogating or torturing a witness to decrypting e-mail messages from newsgroups, it's a virtual guarantee that *Spycraft* is like nothing else you have ever tried. That alone is enough to recommend it to adventurers, but any gamer interested in government and espionage should check this out. If you're not already paranoid, *Spycraft* will guarantee sleepless nights.

Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer II

Sierra

Enhanced Review | Windows 95

★★★☆☆

Silent Thunder is an excellent update to the classic original game. The gameplay retains all the best features of the original, and the graphics, sound, video and live unit additions really bring the whole concept alive, in a way that works. The only negatives are the possible Win95 gotchas, and the lack of traditional performance realism. The latter's more than compensated for by the excellent view options available when the game is paused, however. All in all, a job well done.

Top Gun

Spectrum HoloByte

Enhanced Review | DOS

★★★☆☆

Marketed as an action game, *Top Gun* doesn't really compete well with true action games – the pace is too slow, the action interrupted too frequently with more simulation and adventure game-style elements. The irony is that in reality *Top Gun* is a stripped down re-write of the *Falcon 3.0* engine, without the ambitions of the Electronic Battlefield System of the former but with a lot more graphics splash. So in reality *Top Gun* turns out to be a good, solid – if not ground-breaking – air combat simulation, with a number of useful features for beginners to the genre and enough to satisfy even long-time veterans. The freshest materials here are the unfolding movie and the improved graphics – the former is appropriately corny (given the original Paramount license) and the latter is scaled perfectly to address a wide variety of platforms, from 486-66 on up. If you're looking to see where Spectrum Holobyte is going in their evolution towards *Falcon 4.0*, you won't be disappointed with *Top Gun* as an interesting stop along the way; and if you're entirely new to air combat simulation and want the action without the complications of learning a difficult sim, this is the perfect starter. Just don't expect either the depth of a more serious simulation nor the pacing of a fast-moving console arcade game and you won't be disappointed.

Mutilated monkey meat

Ripper

Take 2 Interactive

Enhanced Review | DOS

★★★½☆

Weighing in at 6 CD's, Take 2 Interactive's *Ripper* is a huge multimedia extravaganza that attempts to deliver everything but the kitchen sink. Taking the original Jack the Ripper story into the year 2040, *Ripper* sports a plot that really delivers. The science fiction twist of travel through Cyberspace provides the formal puzzles with an environment in which they *belong*, rather than popping up as total nonsequiturs. Not for novice gamers, the going gets pretty rough at times. Shoddy acting by top-billed Christopher Walken, a cumbersome navigational interface and inclusion of multiple genres in a single game (not usually a good idea) are the low notes, but none of these come close to undermining the overall quality of *Ripper*.

[1]Spycraft [2] Silent Thunder: A-10 II [3] Top Gun

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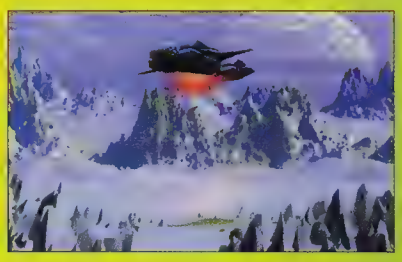

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Reader Service No. 127

EA & Jane's join forces

ATF

Electronic Arts

Enhanced Review | DOS

★★★☆☆

ATF isn't groundbreaking on the simulation side, though it does improve substantially on the accuracy and detail of the flight and combat models for the included planes, and the vectored-thrust and post-stall techniques add a new twist to the art of flying. The CD reference material is top-notch, though – as you'd expect from Jane's – and the multiplayer options have been refined to the point where they actually work quite well.

Terra Nova

Looking Glass Technologies

Enhanced Review | DOS

★★★★☆

Terra Nova is a superb title that combines squad level tactics with fast-paced 3D action. Though not visually stunning, the worlds you do battle in are still pretty darn impressive, and functional in the respect of using logical troop placement in order to prepare attacks, or take defensive cover. With over 10 different weapons, and as many special devices to aid your fight, combat can take on its own unique traits in almost 40 different missions, plus a mission builder (a sub-set of the full mission builder that will be provided in the multi-player pack to be released later) once the game is completed.

Whiplash

Interplay

Enhanced Review | DOS

★★★½☆

Race game fans not hung up on perfect 3D engines will find a lot to like in Interplay's *Whiplash*. If you have a degree in 3D critiquing, you'll find the textures used in the game to break up on screen too often, the 3D world isn't quite as 3D as it should be (if you get airborne, you can see where the rendering ends), you can drive through cars from time to time and other sloppy details.

Gamers who actually care about little things like gameplay and entertainment are likely to find a lot of both of those things. With a (by today's standards) generous 16 tracks, it's the only game in town that sports jump, loops, corkscrews and 16-player network play (with one copy of the game!). So while far from perfect, it just feels right, and that's all that really matters.

Descent II

Computer Games Strategy Plus Stamp of Approval

Geoff Keighley

Enhanced Review | DOS, Windows 95

★★★★½

Interplay and Parallax are sending you back to the alien mines in *Descent II*. Like the original, *Descent II* offers full 360 degree 3D action, and plenty of it. Notable new features include a "guide-bot" to escort you through the mines, ten new weapons, the ability to destroy light fixtures (and a headlight to compensate!) and levels designed specifically for multi-player action. While the engine has not been significantly upgraded, *Descent II* still offers enough new features to make it a solidly better game than the original. Suffice to say, if you liked *Descent*, you'll love *Descent II*. And if you've never sampled the series, what are you waiting for? The demo version is waiting for you on the CD!!

Road Warrior

Gametek

DOS

★½☆☆☆

Road Warrior is Gametek's sequel to *Quarantine*, and it once again drags out the tired old "civilization has collapsed and we've armed our cars" scenario. Unfortunately, in this case our cars are actually hovercraft, which gives the game a very generic first person shooter feel. The high points here include the comic art interludes between missions, and the often sick and silly missions. Rebel nudists enlist your aid to ensure their freedom to cavort in their birthday suits, and an irate ex-husband hires you to blow up the moving van carrying all the stuff his wife got in the divorce. That sort of thing. But none of the bells and whistles can make up for the completely ordinary and uninspired gameplay.

[1] Terra Nova [2] Whiplash
[3] Descent II [4] Road Warrior

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Reader Service No. 158

by M. Evan Brooks

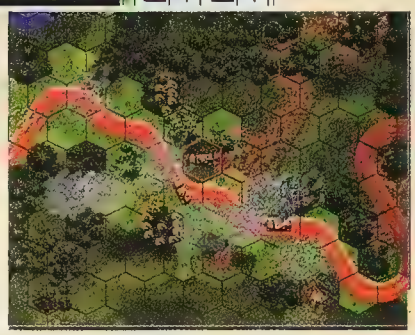
CONNECTIONS 96: An After Action Report

CONNECTIONS is an annual conference sponsored by the U.S. Air Force at Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, AL. It is a chance for the civilian and military wargame communities to come together, to exchange ideas, and possibly to profit from each other's experience. The 1996 CONNECTIONS was held from 5 - 8 March 1996. The conference is open to the public, and I would encourage interested gamers to take advantage of the conference next year *[We'll try to publish registration details for the next conference in a later issue –Ed.]*

Aside from the military community, both civilian print and computer wargame communities were well represented. Among the attendees were Jim Dunnigan (designer of over 150 print wargames and of the on-line *Hundred Years War* and soon-to-be-released *Roman Republic*), Joe Miranda (*S&T* editor and print wargame designer), Lou Zocchi (the Grand Old Man of wargaming and designer of the print games *Battle of Britain* and *Luftwaffe*), Ed Bever (designer of the computer games *Revolution '76* and *No Greater Glory*), Fritz Bronner (designer of the print game *Liftoff* and the computer version, *Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space*), Kelton Flinn (from on-line gaming's Kesmai), Mark Baldwin (designer of *Empire* and its sequels) and numerous others. Interestingly enough, only *Strategy Plus* and *Wired* were present as representatives of the Fourth Estate.

The Air Command & Staff College students have become computer-literate by necessity. Their annual projects are gathered into a "Best of ..." CD and distributed to the attendees. But even more important is the discussions between the military and civilian communities. As someone who has roots in both camps, this writer feels that the military can gain from the civilian experience–namely a product that can be learned in a relatively short period of time, be entertaining, and teach valuable lessons as opposed to the typical military game that takes days to learn the mechanics, hours to process a turn, and is so convoluted that lessons are rarely learned by the participants.

Kirk Schlesinger (editor of *Competitive Edge*) discussed the current state-of-the-art of print wargames, while this writer discussed the same topic vis-à-vis the electronic medium, noting that in the past year, glitz has succeeded gameplay. Spectacular graphics and cut scenes have often substituted for "gameability," and it was noted that even the best games of the year were derivative in nature (e.g., *Command & Conquer* from *Dune II* and *Steel Panthers* from *Typhoon of Steel*). When asked what was the most innovative and original game released in the last 12 months, this writer had to respond "None." While the response may seem overly pessimistic, most of the civilian designers concurred. Finally, the trend of industry consolidation was noted, and predictions were tendered as to what companies would cease operations by the end of the calendar year.



Command & Conquer and Steel Panthers– The best strategy games of '95: more derivative than original

Designers Ed Bever, Fritz Bronner and Mark Baldwin discussed the envelope of the design art in computer wargaming, with an emphasis on conflict, other than war. This writer has advocated the use of *Race Into Space* as a modified R&D (research and development) tool for the military for several years; the game mechanics could easily be modified to postulate a future weapons acquisition simulation. Bronner concurred, and noted that he had already developed a sequel involving the race for Mars and a detailed simulation of satellite development. Sadly, there seems little chance of these being published anytime soon.

The military expanded on its own directions in gaming. The Air Force has developed a scenario of future worlds in 2025 as a test case. Depending on technology, population and resource availability, these range from a semi-*Pax Americana* to a world dominated by multi-national corporations to a bi-polar world split between American and Chinese camps. Although these are not games *per se*, they allow the students to think about the potentials for change and what military force structure would be required.

For those dedicated Air Force proponents, a special project is nearing completion. *The Strategic Bombing Survey*, a detailed analysis of Allied results in World War II Europe, will soon be available on CD-ROM, with full text and pictures. Similar projects are ongoing in other areas, and the *OR* (*Official Records*) of the Civil War are already available to interested users. While these releases may not be user-friendly enough for casual perusal, they offer an unparalleled tool for research and analysis of multi-volume works with detailed analyses and search options.

The Marine Corps' Wargaming Center from Quantico showed *Marine Doom*, a WAD based on the successful commercial game. By having the player only begin with 20% health, a more realistic posture can be developed. The game is designed for network play and commences with a defensive reaction to an assault followed by a counter-attack. With the enemy assault, only a networked team can effectively succeed. Weapons have been modified to include the M-16 and the SAW (Squad Assault Weapon). Luckily, there are no opportunities for military forces to use the chain saw as a suppressive fire weapon.

Although the conference runs from 7 AM to 5 PM, it is the informal after-hour get-togethers that really make it interesting. Rain and tornadoes cannot prevent wargamers from congregating and discussing historical and design problems. The flow of ideas and suggestions is an entertaining and educational experience.

Overall, the conference was a most interesting experience. It has reached the point where the civilian and military communities realize that no contracts will be developed at the conference, but at the same time, it gives both communities a unique opportunity to see what is happening in the outside world. Ideas flow both ways and, hopefully, game creation and implementation will be improved for both sides in their future projects.

[This month's Command Post is brought to you by M. Evan Brooks, long-time Computer Games Strategy Plus *writer and one of our freelance wargaming experts –Ed.]* ■

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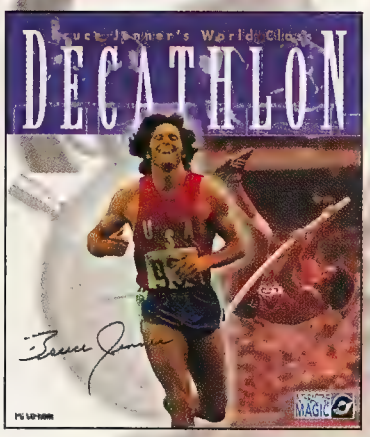
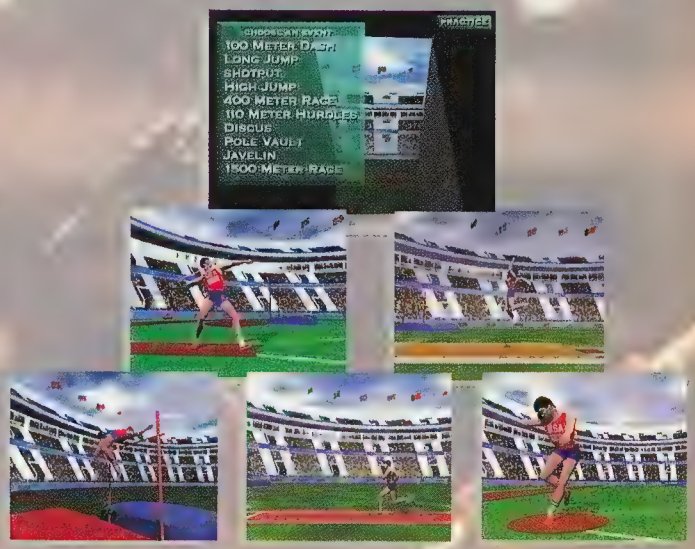


PC CD-ROM



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by Mike Robel

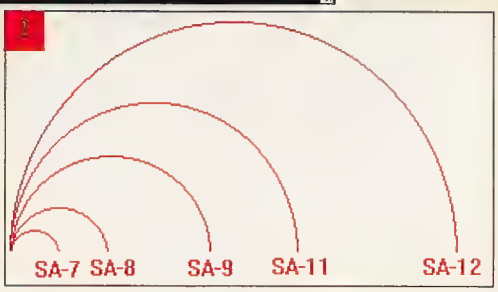
Air Defense, Part II–The Other Guys

In this month's installment, we will explore the niceties of the Other Guy's Air Defense Belt. As with most of my columns, we'll use the former Soviet Union as the model for our Opposing Force (OPFOR).

Because the OPFOR is very concerned about our Air Force's ability to conduct the air-to-ground support of our ground forces and also nearly paranoid about maintaining an inviolability of its own air space, its ground forces have a very heavy air defense structure. Each motorized rifle company has three SA-7 (or equivalent) SAMs. Each Motorized Rifle Regiment has an Air Defense Battery with 4 ZSU-23-4 AAA guns and four SA-9's. At Division, there is an ADA battalion, with five batteries of SA-6's or SA-8s. At the Corps or Army level, there is usually a battalion of SA-11s, and at the Front, a Brigade of SA-12's. To summarize, one Motorized Rifle's ADA assets and supporting slice looks like this:

ADA System	Number
SA-7's	81
ZSU-23-4	12
SA-9	12
SA-8	16
SA-11	6
SA-12	6
Total Systems	129

(Incidentally, I substituted French Croatale Missile for the SA-11s and SA-7's for the SA-9s since *Harpoon II* does not currently model these SAMs.)



[Figure 1] Other Guy Air Defense Belt
[Figure 2] Interlocking Fires at Altitude

As can be seen in **Figure 1**, this is quite an impressive array. The figure does not show nearly the amount of SA-7s available to the division, and, for simplicity, we have only shown one division and its fair share of other ADA systems.

You can readily see the layered defense of the enemy belt. Note that just like the US belt, it provides for overlapping fire for each ADA unit to reduce the consequences of the loss of any one missile unit. The units are also layered in depth, much more so than the US belts, in order to present a much more difficult approach to the target for attacking aircraft. Each layer of the belt overlaps, both with its own neighbors and its higher and lower counterparts.

Each missile belt overlaps in altitude as well. If it were possible to turn the *Harpoon II* display on its side and look at it from ground level, you would see bubbles much like **Figure 2** (this figure is only meant to be representative). This ensures that no aircraft can ingress or egress from its target unmolested by ADA fire.

The Front (equivalent to a US Army) also controls aircraft. In this case, they have been allotted 12 each MiG-29, MiG-27, SU-25, and SU-27. We have also added 18 F-16s, 18 F-15Cs, 18 F-15Es, 6 F-117s, and 18 AH-64 to the US side – representing a slice of aircraft which may be available to a corps or JTF commander – and a solitary Aegis Class Cruiser.

Air Superiority

In order for ground forces to maneuver freely on the ground, one side or the other must have air superiority. There are a number of methods by which this can be accomplished.

Defensive Counter-Air: This is the sort of battle made famous by the Battle of Britain. The British did not really have the ability to go hit the German air fields, and were reduced to fighting the *Luftwaffe* over England. While the British were successful, destroying enemy fighters in the air is the least effective way of gaining air superiority because you stand to lose a lot of your own fighters.

Offensive Counter Air: This entails attacking the enemy's air bases in the hope of destroying a large part, if not all, of his air force on the ground. The Israelis accomplished this successfully during the Six Days' war. They had a relatively easy time of it, because the Egyptian Air Defense Belt was not particularly strong and they timed the attack well.

In Viet Nam, the US had uncontested air superiority over the south, but in the North we had a difficult time because rules of engagement prevented our forces from actively attacking many of the SAM sites, which were inflicting relatively heavy casualties on our planes. In Iraq we corrected this problem by first suppressing the Iraqi ADA system so that our planes could fly more or less freely over the battlefield.

The first step in gaining air superiority against an enemy with a sophisticated ADA defense system is to destroy the ability of that system to influence the battle. This is also true for ground units when they request air support. First, the ADA threat needs to be suppressed or eliminated. In Iraq we used a variety of methods of suppressing the ADA threat. Army systems were integral to this effort. The Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) was used to obliterate an enemy ADA battery deep inside Iraq in order to open a corridor for B-52 strikes. Apache helicopters also successfully attacked enemy ADA units to open corridors. More conventional methods of SAM suppression were flown by Wild Weasel aircraft, which specialize in hunting down SAM radars, and F-117s to take out critical command and control nodes. Not to be overlooked is the value of artillery in taking out those pesky front line air defense systems, the SA-7 and ZSU-23-4. Occasionally even direct fire systems (tanks and Bradleys) can get into the act if the enemy ADA systems are foolish enough to show themselves. Since they are radically different in appearance from most other battlefield systems, they draw fire like bees to honey. Ground forces can also open gaps by rampaging through the enemy rear and destroying ADA batteries, as the Israelis were able to do in 1973 after crossing the canal. That act finally let the IAF into the fray again, which had been suffering terrible losses trying to help the ground forces.

Now, the whole purpose of the take-down of the ADA belt is to destroy the enemy's ability to deny friendly aircraft the use of the sky. In that way, SAMs are much like submarines. They can deny use of an area, but they can't really control it.

With that thought, I'll leave you to ponder the solution to the problem until next month... Until then, good shooting. ■

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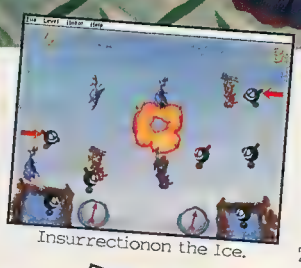
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Allied General

Part II: The less glamorous war

A great deal has been written on taking the offense in *Allied General*. From the game's README file, which includes a rather extensive treatise on the blow by blow capture of objectives, to the pages of the World Wide Web, which are awash with cyber surfers discussing the best way to seize Tobruk, Berlin, or St Lo, much ink has been spilled on the subject. No doubt, attacking is the meat of the game. Nevertheless, obtaining the overwhelming force necessary to capture one portion of the battlefield will frequently require holding in another. To this end, we felt an article covering some basic tenants on *Allied General* defense might prove helpful to the silicon based Pattons and Montgomerys of the world.

The best defense...

Okay, so you've heard it a thousand times, from football to laying blame on co-workers–the best defense is a good offense. Don't sit there and take what your opponent is shoving down your throat, stand up and lay into him. *Allied General* is no exception. Seizing the initiative directs the action where you want it–away from your opponent's objectives. This works best against humans as the computer's artificial intelligence may not respond to your attempts to refocus the flow of the battle.

On the other hand, the CPU's refusal (or rather inability) to react may work to your advantage. In many scenarios the Nazis seem to have an insurmountable number of units (Hey, nobody claimed this was an historical wargame). Killing them all may be more than a little difficult. Why not take them out before they are born? That's right, constantly be on the lookout for ways of denying prestige points to the motherboard. Flank attacks by small task forces, paradrops, and amphibious assaults are all methods to pull a surprise coup on a lightly defended city. If you have air superiority, bomb the hell out of the bad guy's cities with level bombers.

Lean on me

Despite the previously mentioned offensive minded ploys, the time will come when a piece of real estate must be held, pure and simple. There are two critical elements to the holding: proper utilization of supporting units, and terrain.

The three types of supporting units are artillery, the air defense family, and fighters. Each has a key role in defending. Due to their ability to provide defensive fire to adjacent units artillery is a must for any successful defense. Remember, the pivotal aspect of the series General *[officially known as the Five Star Series–ed]* is initiative. Artillery provides defensive fire before the initiative is calculated for the attack proper, and suppressed enemy strength points stay that way for the ensuing attack. Obviously, the artillery should be placed to provide support to the most units without allowing a direct attack on itself.

Air defense units provide a function similar to artillery. In this case however, protection is provided to adjacent units from air attack. Place these guys to primarily protect the artillery. The easiest way for the bad guys to dismantle a defense is by first taking out the artillery with air attacks. The air defense units may get them to think twice.

[1] No defensive magic will save the Italians from this onslaught

[2] Good example of an effective (albeit expensive) defense

[3] For the Nazis–too few men, too much front

Ditto for aircraft, especially fighters. In order to bomb a unit the bomber must be in the hex. If your fighter is already there it will first have to be eliminated. This adds another layer on the onion the attacker must peel in order to capture his objective.

Terrain is a strange bird in *Allied General*. Certainly, geography works in a manner familiar to wargamers–units in the city, mountains, etc, are tough; those in the clear are not. Yet the software's method is a tad curious. Rather than add a bonus to a unit's defense factor, terrain places a cap on the attacking unit's initiative–frequently enabling the defender to fire first. For example, the clear terrain cap is 99 (unlimited) while the cap for units defending in a forest or city is three and one, respectively. That will cut those Panthers' initiative down to size!

While certainly not the most glamorous part of the game, sound defensive tactics are critical to the gamer's ability to win, especially in the campaign game, where defending one location with the minimum number of units is necessary to conduct an offense on the other side of the screen with overwhelming force. Hopefully, the above will assist in your endeavors to smash the wicked Boche within your computer, log on to the Internet, and splash some ink on a new subject. ■

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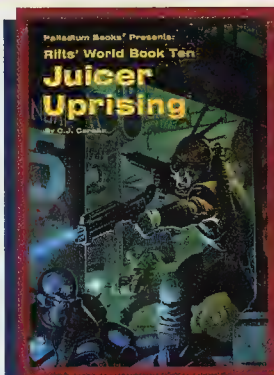

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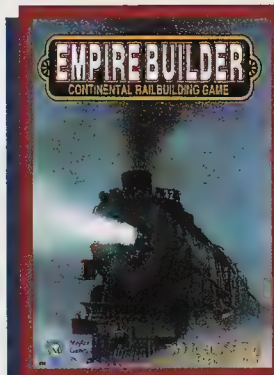

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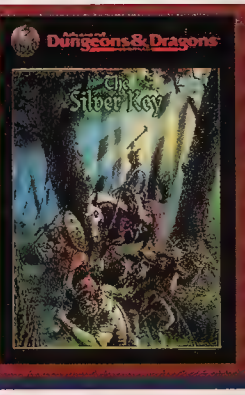

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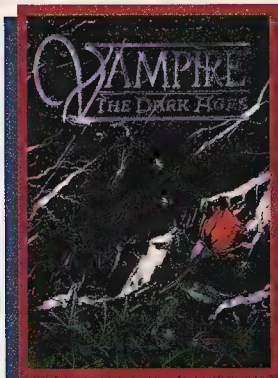

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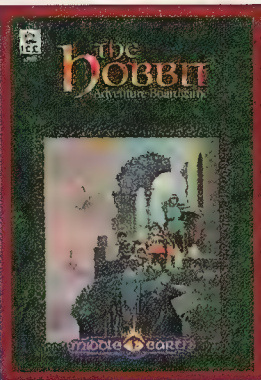

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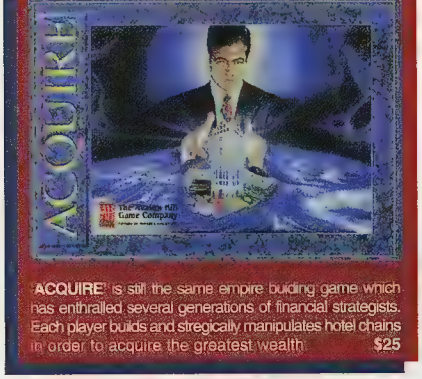

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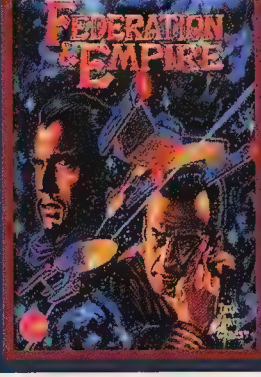

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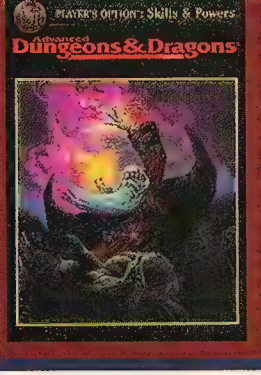

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by Cindy Vanous and Eric Leaf

Caesar II

Part II: A lesson in ancient city management

As you fire up the system, crack your knuckles, and pull the *Caesar II* CD from its case, you can't help but ponder that ages-old question, "What exactly is the difference between a Roman governor and a galley slave?" Well, that's the same question that folks have asked us, and we do have an answer for you. The difference (besides a lot of paperwork and staff meetings, or, alternatively, a lot of whips and heavy rowing) is *money*. Cash. Denarii. Dough. Dead emperors. Moolah. Enough of it, and your city prospers. Too little, and you'll be sharing an oar and a set of leg-irons with Uglius Maximus, the guy too mean to throw to the lions.

Why is this? Well, let's just say that the Emperor may want you to believe that he is a patient and forgiving sort of monarch, but this is an outright lie. He's shallow and greedy. And if you don't make your city profitable, he'll be more than happy to hand your little province over to somebody else. After all, he has at least a dozen more fawning sycophants just like yourself, all of them waiting for you to make a mistake. Needless to say, you don't want this to happen. But how to prevent it? When you're starting your first city, it's difficult to make a profit at first.

[1] Industry is the foundation of your city. Build it first

[2] Build housing close to your factories

[3] Your new neighborhood ... if you're lucky

Spend money to make money

Well, as they always say in those get-rich-quick seminar videos you see advertised on late-night television, you have to spend money to make money. And, fortunately, you start out the game with a certain amount of cash. This will be very useful in setting up your main source of income: industry. You may dream of fine palaces, plazas, and arenas. Visions of armies and conquest may dance through your head. But it's a good idea to put these ventures on hold until you're making enough cash to support them, or else you'll find that your startup money disappears faster than donuts left unattended in the programmer's break room at a software game company.

So this leaves us with the practical question of how to start out that first city and not lose your shirt doing it. Well, if you're playing the game in City mode, part of the work is already done for you. The game assumes that you have a stable supply of raw materials from the surrounding province. If you're playing in Province mode, however, you'll have to set that up for yourself. If your province has access to either a land or sea trade route, you'll probably want to set up a trading post or a port. Although these are more expensive to build than farms, quarries, or mines, you don't need to hire plebes to work there. This makes ports or posts a one-time investment, instead of something which has to be maintained monthly. Place several warehouses around your port or post, and build a road to the city. If you have access to more than one trade route, you may want to build an additional port or post, so that you can bring different types of materials into your city. This is a good idea, since you can only use so much of one type of material. Once the warehouses start filling up with raw materials, you can return to your city and build factories to turn the stuff into something that your fellow Romans will actually want to buy.

Probably the most important thing to do once you go to your city is to safeguard that startup money. It's rather difficult to build profitable industries, or anything else, when some thief is three provinces away, spending what used to be your treasury on wine and loose women. And it's even tougher to explain the situation to your Emperor. Place some temples and shrines in a block in your city. Nobody safeguards your money better than priests. This fact has some historical basis, since the first Roman mint was built in

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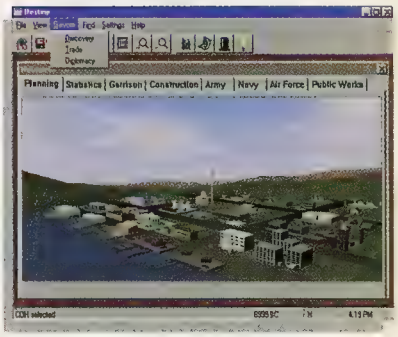

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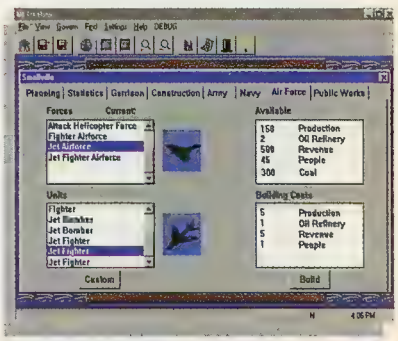

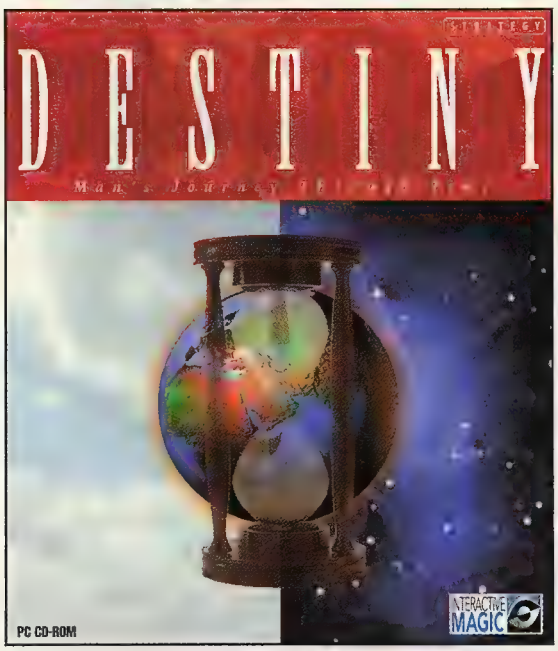

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[1] Save that world conquest for later inthe game

[2] The usual result of insufficient plebes

a temple. For extra protection, place several praefectures around your block of temples. This will provide soldiers and guardsmen to patrol the area. For high-security or industrial areas, you should place the praefectures 6-7 spaces apart to make sure that you have complete security coverage.

Getting the peasants to work

Now it's finally time to build those factories. Unfortunately, however, you can't just plunk the factories down and expect them to turn out products on their own. Although the Romans made staggering technological advances in the fields of agriculture, irrigation, and sanitation, they just didn't get around to inventing the fully-automated assembly line. So you're actually going to have to persuade some Romans to move to your city and work in the factories. And the one thing that you need to know about these Romans is that they are, by and large, pickier than the average Persian cat. If you don't keep them happy enough, they'll move away, or riot, or set your city on fire, or even go whining to the Emperor about what a bad governor you are. And that's a one-way ticket back to that ocean cruise with Uglius Maximus that we mentioned earlier.

The most dangerous Roman complaint is "We're thirsty!" Nothing inspires more hatred in the hearts of your little virtual citizens than the lack of fresh water. Although you could just sink wells and provide a primitive water source to an area, you'll make your Romans much happier if you provide them with running water. This means you'll need to build a system of reservoirs and aqueducts to carry the water from the river. If you place your reservoirs 13 spaces apart, you will have complete piped water coverage of an area. Piped water, however, is only half the battle. You will also need to build fountains, to bring the water to the surface. This is where the Water detail map comes in very handy. Place your fountains so that all of the areas you plan to develop have both piped and surface water available. It's also a good idea to place bath-houses next to your reservoirs, since this helps to improve Roman morale and to reduce the risk of plague.

Now that you have a water supply, there are a few more things which you'll need in order to complete your Roman Industrial Park. For example, it's rather difficult for you to make money off of your factories unless you have somebody there to collect taxes for you. Build Aventine forums 6-7 spaces apart to provide complete tax coverage for the area. You will also want to place markets within 6 spaces of your factories since they won't produce anything if there's nowhere to sell it. Finally, you'll want to connect everything with roads. Road access is essential to commerce in your Roman city. Some structures, such as markets, forums, and factories, have to be touching a road in order to be able to use it. Others, such as houses, can be one space away from a road and still have access to it. If road access is not available, most buildings will be considered inactive. A factory without a road won't produce anything except cobwebs.

One useful trick here, if you're playing on Novice or Easy level, and have extra cash to spare, is to build plaza squares instead of roads in your industrial area. Plaza squares are counted as roads, plus they also tend to raise property values in an area. You'll find this to be very important, since the presence of a factory makes the local property values drop faster than the resale value of a `72 Pinto. As a matter of fact, we can guarantee that your factory district won't exactly be the high-rent section of town. And since Romans don't like to live in low-rent areas any more than you do, you can expect unrest in your industrial quarter. So it's a good idea to liberally sprinkle the area with praefectures. Build them a space or two away from any housing developments, since praefectures also lower property values. And speaking Roman housing, you're going to need to build some. The houses need to be relatively close to your factories, since your little industrial guys don't like to commute very far to go to work. After all, the two-car family is still a couple of millennia away.

Time for edutainment

That's it! Now that you have your industries set up you can turn the rest of your startup cash into public works, education, hospital facilities, entertainment, housing for you and your well-to-do friends (on the other side of town from the meat-packing plant, naturally), and, of course, that army that you've always wanted. Oh, there are two final things that you may want to know. First, and most importantly, never ever ever forget to bribe the Emperor. Little things which might otherwise annoy him (such as a slightly unprofitable year, a bad harvest, or a twenty-seven block riot in which his statue is pulled down and smashed) tend not to bother him quite so much if his pockets are well-lined with your money. And once you start bribing him, he'll be even harsher on you if you stop. So don't. Second, make certain that you hire more than enough plebes to take care of your city. If you don't have enough of these hard-working guys, it's a toss-up whether the city will burn down or fall apart first.

In future years, as long as you don't spend more than you make, you can expand your city, develop your province, increase foreign trade, and take over neighboring tribes for fun and profit. So we bid you good-bye, and wish you a long and happy rule, successful conquests, and a life free from Mr. Maximus and all his shipboard friends.

Hail!

Cindy Vanous and Eric Lea are Sierra technical support representatives. ■

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Part III: How to make enemies and kill your friends

If you've ever participated in a network gaming session, you already know how much fun multi-player games can be. You also know how nasty it can get; it goes without saying that human players are better than computer-controlled foes, but along with those improvements come some undesirable elements. Every network gamer has to deal with certain common people and situations: the arrogant winner, the disgruntled loser, or simply the sting of defeat at the hands of a real, live person. For most people, network games entail higher stakes than bouts with the computer. After all, when the computer frags you in an action game or destroys your fantasy empire, it doesn't make fun of you afterwards. Human players do.

... bear in mind that multi-player games are a different animal than single-player games.

The intense competition of network games makes it pretty tough for newcomers to learn the ropes. Often the new guy finds himself trounced before he even gets started, and it's hard to come away with any valuable insight when you've been eliminated before you even get a chance to explore the territory. *Warcraft II* can be particularly nasty in this respect: hordes of mean little guys swarm down upon your defenseless base, shrouded in the Fog of War. You often don't know where they came from or how there got to be so many of them; all you know is you're finished.

No article can convey all the subtleties of network *Warcraft II*, but here are a few tips for getting up to speed with your network gaming pals, or getting a leg up on your equally talented opponents.

Learn the interface

I've seen several *Warcraft II* games where an inability to issue precise commands in the heat of battle cost someone the match. There are several ways to order your *Warcraft II* troops, and you need to find the one that works best for you in tight situations. The old *Warcraft* mouse configuration is good for veterans of that game, while the newer interface is perhaps a bit more streamlined. Keyboard commands are particularly useful because they're so fast. Learn them if you feel comfortable with them. Also get in the habit of issuing commands in the shortest possible fashion. For example, never use the Mine Gold/Chop Trees button. Right-clicking on the forest or gold mine accomplishes the same thing much faster.

Play the solo game—and win

If you can beat the solo game (either as Orcs or Humans) then you'll go a long way towards mastering multi-player conflicts. In many games this isn't the case, because the computer opponent fails to use the really nasty tactics that human players will always attempt. To some extent this is true in *Warcraft II,* even on the most difficult levels, the computer has a tendency to attack you piecemeal instead of amassing a huge army and crushing you, but the level of opposition in Act IV gets high enough that you'll be forced to improve your game. Solo play will teach you to increase your efficiency and deal with pressure: those last few missions feature lots of offense by your computer opponents. And since there are no easy-win features (like walling up the computer opponent's base in *Command & Conquer*) you'll have to learn legitimate skills.

[1] Multiple Shipyards or Barracks will often save your life [2] A big fleet of Juggernauts doesn't hurt, either

Still, always bear in mind that multi-player games are a different animal than single-player games. Unlike the computer, which likes to keep probing at a single part of your defenses, humans use distraction and guerrilla attacks. And unlike the computer, humans are indeed capable of producing huge strike forces, so be prepared.

Understand the map

Before you even start to play, you should have some clues about your strategy. How's that? Well, for starters, look at the size of the map you'll be fighting on, and the number of players in the game. Don't let the

[3] Here I've just dashed down to find an unattended gold mine [4] Aerial units are great for exploring, and can spot submarines like this one [5] Of you don't have aerial units, a spare Peon can explore

master player breeze past this stuff; make sure he tells you what map you're playing on and what size it is. If he knows these things and you don't, he has a huge advantage.

Let's say you're on a small (32X32) map designed for four players, but you're only playing a 2-player game. Among other things, you can now deduce that:

- There are four start positions on the map, probably one in each of the map's four corners, and your opponent could be in any one of them. Plan accordingly.
- There is limited room on the map, so start making cheap troops early for defense, or else you could be knocked out by a small scouting party.
- There are almost definitely two free gold mines out there; they were supposed to be for those extra two players. Since only two people are playing the game, they're unattended. You'd better go look for them and mine them, quick!

Your strategy would be somewhat different for a large map: long-term growth would be more important. So make sure you know the terms of the battle before you begin!

Explore as fast as possible

Knowledge is power, and you need all the power you can get. Fog of War cuts down somewhat on the value of reconnaissance, but it's still critical to know where important resources like gold mines and oil patches are. If you've uncovered the whole map and can see the big picture, then you'll be able to predict what your enemies are doing just by knowing where they started and where the important goodies are. Use a Peon or a Grunt to scout the land if you don't have a Balloon or an expendable Destroyer. They aren't fast, but if you're lucky they'll survive for a while and give you valuable information.

One thing you should try to figure out right from the start is what terrain dominates the landscape, and which resources (if any) are rare. This way you will avoid building a useless fleet of ships in a pond, or building lots of Archers and Ballistas on a map where lumber is scarce.

Expand like crazy

This may be obvious, but there are a few caveats, especially if you're used to single-player *Warcraft II*. In the single-player game, you'll find that speedy expansion isn't critical until the last few missions, where the computer tends to eat up gold very quickly. In single-player games, it's often best to expand slowly so you can consolidate your new territory. In multi-player games, everyone's expanding as fast as they can, and by concentrating on fortifying your base or mining only the closest gold mines, you will end up losing out on the up-for-grabs resources. Your window of opportunity shrinks at an alarming rate, so start sending out Peons as soon as possible.

Single Peons, or Peons with a single-unit escort, are a great way to take over new mines in network sessions. Send them out, and when they find an unoccupied mine, have them build a town hall right next to the mine. Then start getting gold as fast as possible! Some of your Peons will be killed as they explore, and some of your halls will be destroyed, but this early, unprotected expansion is vital. If just one or two of these new outposts lasts a few minutes unmolested, build a few Barracks and Cannon Towers nearby and start to fortify the area. This leads us to the next tip.

Make multiple barracks or ship yards

Beginning players mistakenly think of each battle solely in terms of getting *more* resources and producing *more* units than the other guys. Not so! Games are usually determined by who gets resources *faster* and produces military units *faster* than their opponents. It may seem wasteful to build four Barracks at a key site – after all, that's gold you could be spending to make new units – but after getting swamped a few times you'll find that the ability to produce new combat units quickly outweighs the inefficiency of having several buildings that all do the exact same thing. Multiple barracks allow you to be flexible. Instead of having a huge standing army that could easily be in the wrong place at the wrong time, you can have relatively small defense forces and augment them quickly when necessary. In scenarios where ships are key, the same rule apples: make lots of shipyards, or else your main base can easily be swamped by a big invasion fleet and your exiting shipyards will promptly be de-stroyed. Game over.

Watch and learn

Obviously there are hundreds of specific situations that we can't cover in a single article, but here's a great tip that will help you in any situation. After you have been beaten, ask the winner how he won, or what he thinks you did wrong. If he isn't a jerk, he will probably give you an honest answer. However, even the most honest player is sometimes reluctant to reveal his best tips, so if at all possible you should *watch* a good player during a multi-player game. Analyze what he's doing and how it differs from your general strategy. In the heat of battle, players forget they're being watched, and they won't hold back any secrets. That's why this is the absolute best way to learn. If you want even more insights, try to watch several sides of a network game: go back and forth between computers and make a note of what everyone's doing. You'll get a real sense of what's going on in the total game, and what conditions or tactics resulted in one player's victory and another player's defeat. ■

Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat

WAAAAAAARGH!

Addicting, engrossing, exciting, frustrating, infuriating *Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat* has left me wanting more ... and less. Like many users I have gotten tired of reloading a battle in *Warhammer* just because Allor got all excited and charged a horde of Orcs, causing me to lose a good many men trying to keep his sorry behind alive.

Hacking to help your hack 'n' slash

One of the biggest gripes I have with this fascinating game is the replacement rate. During campaigns oft-times there is no one swimming in the replacement pool, even after your units have sustained heavy losses. After much trial and a great deal of error and reading of others' travails on the net, I will attempt to show you how you can take a licking and keep on ticking by hacking the game files in *Warhammer*.

In order to accomplish your mission successfully you must first understand the format of two files: army.mrc and the savegame file. The information you need to change is repeated in these files, and they must be modified in tandem if your changes are going to take. Each unit has a number of lines describing it and its leader, if any. Here are the lines we will be concerned with, in this case from the Grudgebringer Cavalry:

```
banner:BannerMrcCmdr,0
addmagicitem:ItemGrudgeBringer
addmagicitem:ItemShieldOfPtolos
setstats:s_side=2,12,9,4
setstats:s_move=4,3,3,3,3,1,3,1,7
setstats:s_mount=1,11,3,16,13,0
setstats:s_weap=3
setstats:S_BalWeap=0
setstats:s_pntval=13
setstats:s_cmdr=0,0,4,0
setstats:s_armname=0,4
set:s_calualties=3
set:s_routed=0
set:s_kills=16
set:s_Exp=1903
```

First of all, before you touch anything, *back up* all your files! You *will* make mistakes and trash saves. I did, many times. It is all too easy to put an extra space or other invisible character in a line without meaning to. Use Notepad or Wordpad to edit the files.

Look at the "sides" and "calualties" (note: this is not a mis-spelling–it is always referred to as "calualties") variables. For sides the middle two numbers, twelve and nine, represent the maximum number of men in a unit and the current number after subtracting dead and wounded. Resist the temptation to play with the maximum number of men in a unit. Unless you modify the units before starting the game there are so many places where that number is kept it is nearly guaranteed you will miss one, rendering your efforts useless. You can change the third number back to twelve from nine, but it is recommended that you reserve space for any wounded men. Wounded troops sit out one mission and then come back. Always setting your units back to full strength after an engagement will give you negative numbers of replacements later on if you do. Whenever you add to the number of men available like this you should also reduce the calualties line accordingly.

The series of numbers following s_move= are the base stats of the unit or leader, listed in the order found in the rule book. Modifying these numbers by more than one or two can have grave consequences. The line below gives stats for the unit's mounts. You can use these same procedures on the other files to create new units, but that should only be attempted once you have the basics down.

If you want to move a magic item to a different unit, all you need to do is cut out that line from where it appears in the unit you're stealing it from and then paste that line in between the banner line and the s_side line. In both cases be sure you don't leave any

[1] Ceridan and other single heroes may be used without fear of loss. Even if they die they will come back again and again [2] Whenever a battle includes a bait unit such as these Dwarfs, you can usually win by hanging them out to dry and shooting at their attackers. Dwarfs can take a lot of punishment [3] When your missile trap is set up you should get some choice shots at the flanks and rear of units going after missile troops

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Reader Service No. 50

extra tabs or carriage-returns, as that will surely cause you a load error. Put the cursor on top of the last character on the end of the banner line, and then hit the right arrow key until your cursor appears at the beginning of the next line and hit the enter key. Now that you have a new line, paste the magic item. The text should be lined up along with all the other entries. If it's not, reload the file to be safe and try again, being sure to grab the whole line when cutting. If you place your cursor all the way to the left it will turn into an arrow. Clicking then will select the entire line automatically.

Winning the un-winable

While a number of missions will at first look to be impossible to win, remember: appearances are deceptive. Capturing Hiln is the first such mission you will encounter. Hiln cannot be taken alive. No matter what you do, he will be killed by the Skaven chief, who then leaves. There is no way to kill the Skaven chief, either. However, you *can* kill the rat-ogre. If you place Allor and your crossbowmen near the bottom of the screen where they can see the far lower right part of the map, the rat-ogre will start charging towards them, and they can then let fly at him. Have your cavalry ready to engage him just in case you don't kill him off with arrows or spells. If your cavalry has to engage, be sure to use Grudgebringer; there is a good chance you can set him on fire. The rest of the Skaven should succumb to the combination of missile fire, Allor's spells and melee combat.

Whenever you can, use the numerous small stands of trees to hide units poised to strike enemies in the flank (as in the Hiln scenario). You can hide your cavalry and infantry from the Skaven, giving them only Allor and the crossbowmen as targets. If you turn off the AI for the cavalry and infantry you should be able to hit them in the flank when you charge.

Hitting a unit in the rear is devastating. As soon as my cav charged home and before I could take a screen shot this unit of Skaven broke. All were dead within fifteen seconds

Missile fire and mages

After a great deal of frustration it seems to work best when you turn off the AI for any missile troops or magic users you have. If you leave the AI on, your bow-men will frequently dither about, looking for some sort of ideal position from which to shoot, or will advance past your lines, leaving you no choice but to rush forward to support them, incurring heavy casualties.

Allor and other mages are even more of a problem. If you leave their AI on and tell them to start casting at some unit they will almost invariably charge forward, trying to get into range. Not only that, but you must

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leave them a great deal of space – even to their sides – so they don't fry friendly units in their zeal. I found that about an (on-screen) inch to either side was sufficient, but so far as I can tell, there is no safe distance in front of a mage. Anything standing along the shortest path between a mage's target and the mage may be zotted.

I highly recommend targeting mages at enemy missile troops. The various tangle and nuisance spells tie them up, keeping them from shooting, while the damage spells will eventually kill them.

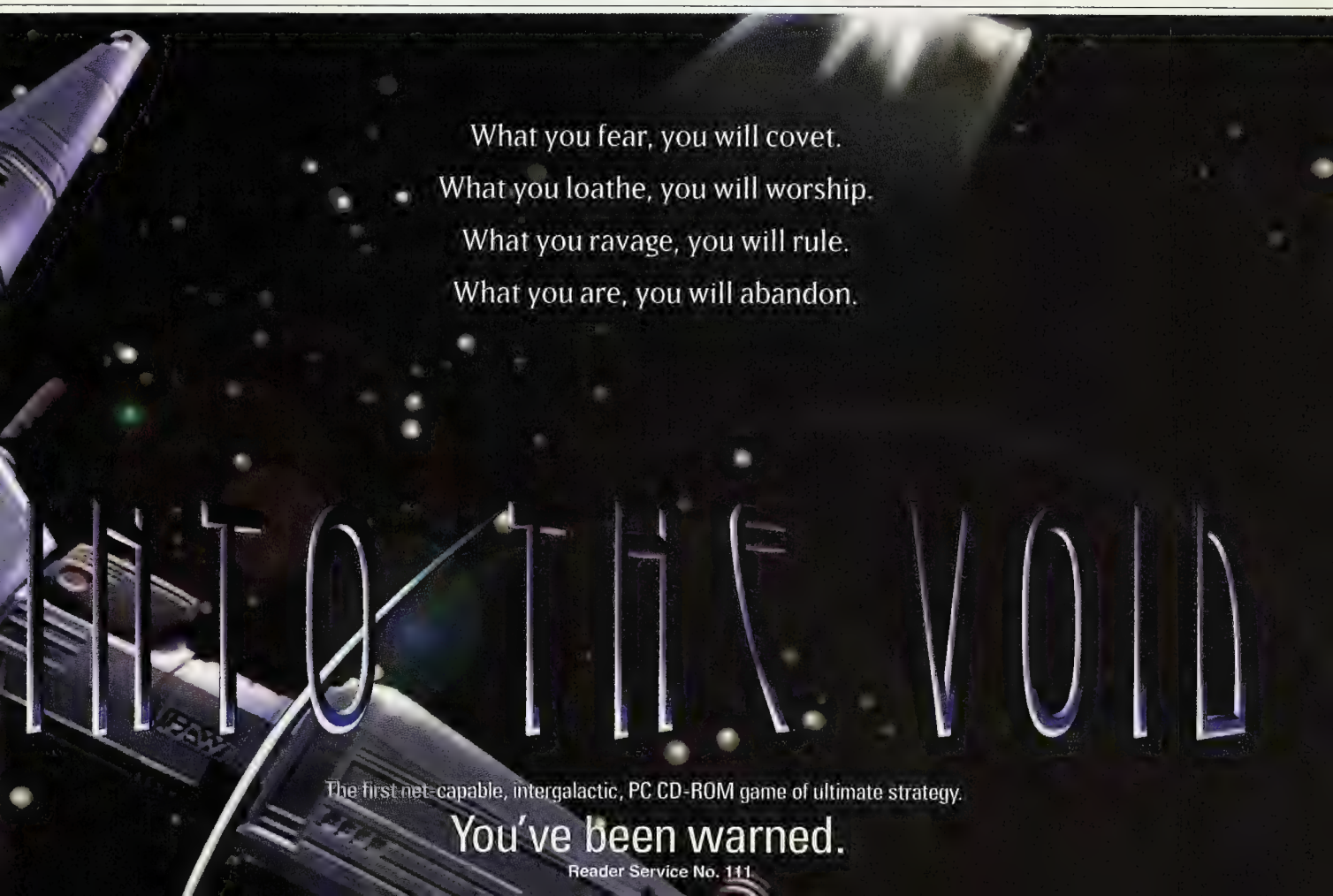
Concentrate all fire on one unit at a time. You want to put enemy units away as fast as possible. There will no doubt be a steady stream of Orcs, Skaven or what-have-you pouring forth which will have to be dealt with. Using mages and missile fire on lead units will often halt an entire column for substantial periods of time, especially if the lead unit routes. Trailing units will spend time trying to wheel around the leaders and become disorganized.

Even with the AI turned off on missile units and mages, they will still fire automatically at targets you designate once they are in range. Remember to double-click on the magic button to get mages to cast continuously at a target. The best overall strategy is to put your missile troops and mages at the rear with a few infantry to engage those units that make it through. Hide as many units as you can, particularly cavalry to hit enemies in the flank or rear. For battles where civilian targets are in danger, try leading one unit of cavalry around so the enemy can see it, then high-tail it back to your own lines. As soon as they see you, they will stop eating the populace and make a beeline for your troops. (As an aside, that silly hero button provides a brief unit increase in leadership and strength *each time* it is hit. So flail away, it really *does* do something.)

The much feared and dreaded Rat-Ogre. Using Allor and the crossbowmen on him should turn him into a rat-kabob in short order

When trying to find magic items, look for a tiny, slowly blinking white triangle. There is almost always a peculiar terrain feature nearby. For example, the Dragon Blade is masquerading as a snowman in the Hiln scenario. If a magic item has a green check-mark next to its name when you first go to look at it, it does not need to be invoked; it is automatically in use. No more than five items may be given to any one unit. Most of these items will best aid your melee units. The Shield of Ptolos protects against missile fire and is a wonderful addition to the Grudgebringer Cavalry, as an example.

Happy slaughtering. If you have any questions you can reach me on CompuServe at 72662,3066 or on GEnie at Sam.Baker or through the internet at 72662.3066@CompuServe.com. Trolls is brill. ■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SierraWeb

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The average commercial Web site is little more than a glorified magazine ad. The better ones feature demos for you to download, links to other interesting Web sites, and a few extra items which serve to add interest to the site. Sometimes you can tell – just by the lack of attention to detail – that the company only has a Web site because they feel obligated to do so. After all, everyone else in on the Internet; they don't want to be left behind.

Sierra's Web site (*SierraWeb*), on the other hand, is a great example of a vital and well-maintained site. Aside from the usual, commercial aspects of the site there's a lot of interesting material to be found here. All in all, the Sierra pages make you feel like you're perusing an expensive, commercial service rather than a free Web page.

One of the interesting and unique aspects of the Sierra site is that it lets you customize your own personalized "Web Page." Of course, you aren't really creating a full-blown Web page of your own. If you could do that, then a lot of internet service providers would be going out of business right now. However, what you can do is customize the background that's displayed as you peruse *SierraWeb*, and you can make it easier to access information on the kind of games you like. The best part of all is that the site keeps track of who you are with a password and a user name, so your configuration will be remembered the next time you log on.

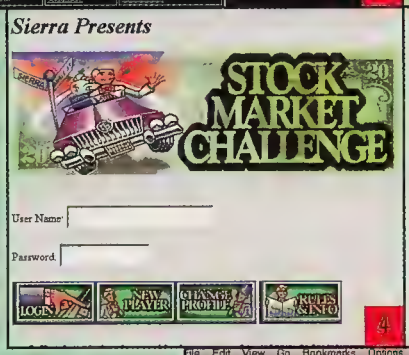
Aside from this personal touch, the other thing that will really strike you as special about this site is the Live On-Line area. Though at present time it's under heavy construction, this site will soon offer a host of social and gaming options to rival the services on many commercial networks.

Currently featured in the Live On-Line section is *The Stock Market Challenge*. This game lets you compete with players from around the globe in an ongoing quest for greater riches. The best part of this game is that it uses actual, up-to-date stock market figures, so there's an undeniable element of realism. The real-life stock figures would be impossible in an off-line game, so it's nice to see Sierra capitalizing (ouch!) on the Internet's vast pool of resources.

Details remain sketchy about *The Realm*, a fantasy adventure that claims it will have "over 13 million different locations" when it's finished. Finally, a real-time chat area (also under construction) will round out the Live On-Line area, and will undoubtedly be extremely popular. Guest appearances by Sierra game designers will only add to the chat area's appeal.

All this and more awaits you at *SierraWeb*. Drop by and register for their upcoming games (especially *The Realm*), and you'll be notified by e-mail when the beta testing begins.

Several game companies have recently started to experiment with Web page registration, forcing you to provide your name, address and other vital statistics before you're allowed the "privilege" of viewing their site. This is a bad deal in most cases: you're giving them useful customer information, and in exchange, all you get to see is their second-rate advertising. *SierraWeb* is one of the very few home pages that's actually worth registering for, and that may be the highest complement you can give a Web site. Watch out – some companies have recently sought such information to gather into huge databases for future junk e-mail postings to millions. Oh boy. —*joe grant bell*



[1] A trip to the User Control Center will let me change the display

[2] Here's my "personal Web page"

[3] The Live On-Line area will undoubtedly grow in the next several months

[4] Just remember: greed is good

[5] Aha! I've just customized my background. Cards, anyone?

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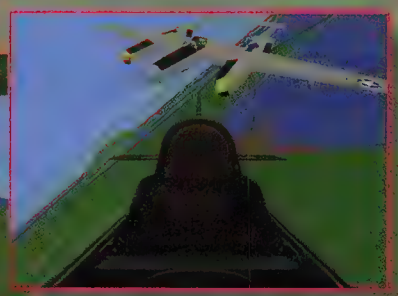

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Reader Service No. 75

by Cindy Yans

No paper training for Virtual Fido

"What game is that?"

"It's not a game, it's a toy."

"But it looks like a game."

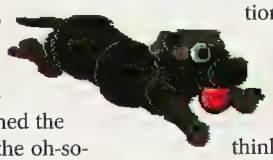
"Well it's not. It's a toy."

There, I told them.

"AwwooOOOH," says the dog. Agreed. Chess is a game. A Slinky is a toy. Spud is a game. A rubber chicken is a toy. *Leisure Suit Larry 23* is a game (well, any minute now...) and *Dogz* is a toy.

Quite a long time ago, a friend told me that he had downloaded "dogs" from the Internet. "Uh huh," I grunted. "But you have to see it," said he. "It's a *virtual* dog. A *virtual* dog can be your *virtual* pet." Dismissing him as a *virtual* jerk, I said, "Sure. Right. Uh huh." And that was the end of that. Almost.

Months later at a conference, a representative from P.F. Magic handed me a copy of *Dogz*. I smiled sweetly, brought it home and it sat on my shelf for awhile. One day, when there was absolutely nothing more appealing to do, I opened the oh-so-cute box with pictures of the oh-so-cute dogs, and installed *Dogz*.



I took the *Dogz*-owner personality quiz, and received my psychological profile. Years of psychoanalysis and regression therapy probably would have gotten me the same result, but think how much cheaper and more convenient this was. Then there they were–the doghouses–each one containing a demo-puppy to release and evaluate. After about five seconds, my skepticism evaporated and I found myself cooing, "Awwwwwww..." (and so the Grinch heart grew *three* sizes that day), "Awwwwwwwww...."

Dogz is a must for any pet lover/computer geek out there. After playing with the demo pups and choosing a type of dog (does *anyone* choose the chihuahua?) you must undergo the adoption process. After adopting and naming your new pet (and registering the software of course), your dog is there for you to love and play with–or not. *This* is the advantage of the virtual pet. If you forget to take him out to play, forget to feed him or forget to deal with him at *all* for days on end, he will not starve, die, or feel in any way neglected. And when you *do* play with him, he will yelp with joy, whine, bark, pant, trip, belch, fall, jump, roll over and do all of the other normal, endearing doggie things.

He has a playpen which can rest nicely in memory, visible only as an option on your toolbar, or which can be in the forefront of your other computer applications. After grinding through a particularly nasty spreadsheet, think how much fun it could be to have a game of catch or a belly-rubbing session with your virtual pet. You can keep him in his pen where he will eat, sleep, prance and hide, or you can release him to scamper all over your applications. He will come when you whistle, and play tug-o-war until you drop (since *he* won't). You can also paint him any variety of colors (although mine looks particularly abashed when I force him to be orange and purple...), and take really cool snapshots. I find this product to be a *tremendous* stress reliever. After all, it's a toy!

If you wish, *Dogz* can also be your screen-saver, allowing your pet to march bravely around the screen patrolling and howling at the moon...a feature which may prove annoying to others if you leave the sound on with the volume up. "Awwoo, Awwoo, AwwooOOOH" says the dog. "Turn that blasted thing off," say my coworkers.

[1] The nursery

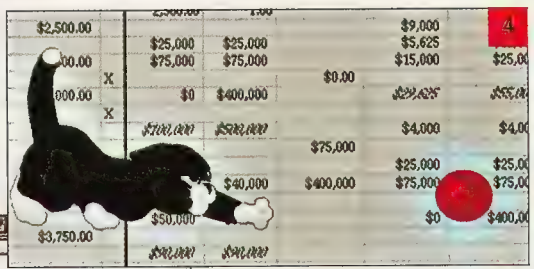
[2] Stupid Pet Tricks made simple

[3] Trauma guards the moon

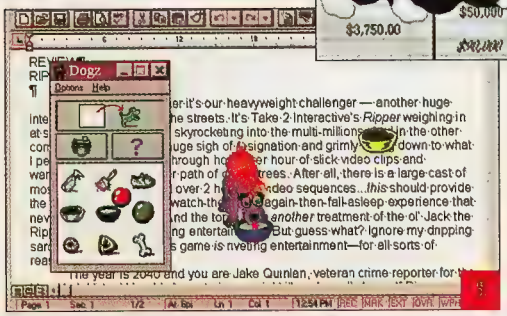
P.F. Magic's animators have done an amazing job in capturing the mannerisms of the domestic canine. While the actual "picture" of the dog is not in any way realistic, the motion, actions and reactions are classic. Some pretty intuitive artists must have spent a long time dog-watching to have perfected the animation to this extent. Upon exploring the DOGZ.INI file, there are parameters which govern things such as age and hiccup proclivity. You can change the numbers here if you wish, but may experience unexpected results.

By the time you read this, P.F.Magic will probably have released its next innovation, *Catz*, which provides the same companionship to cat lovers. And then, who knows: *Gerbilz, Hamsterz,* or just plain *Rodentz*? How about *Snakz, Lizardz, Kimodo Dragonz*? Maybe even...*Kidz*?

Two cars in every garage, a rubber chicken in every pot, and a Petz on every computer. Goodbye stress, farewell responsibility and so long, pooper scooper. ■



[4] Coming soon to a spreadsheet near you



[5] Trauma slobbers all over my Ripper review

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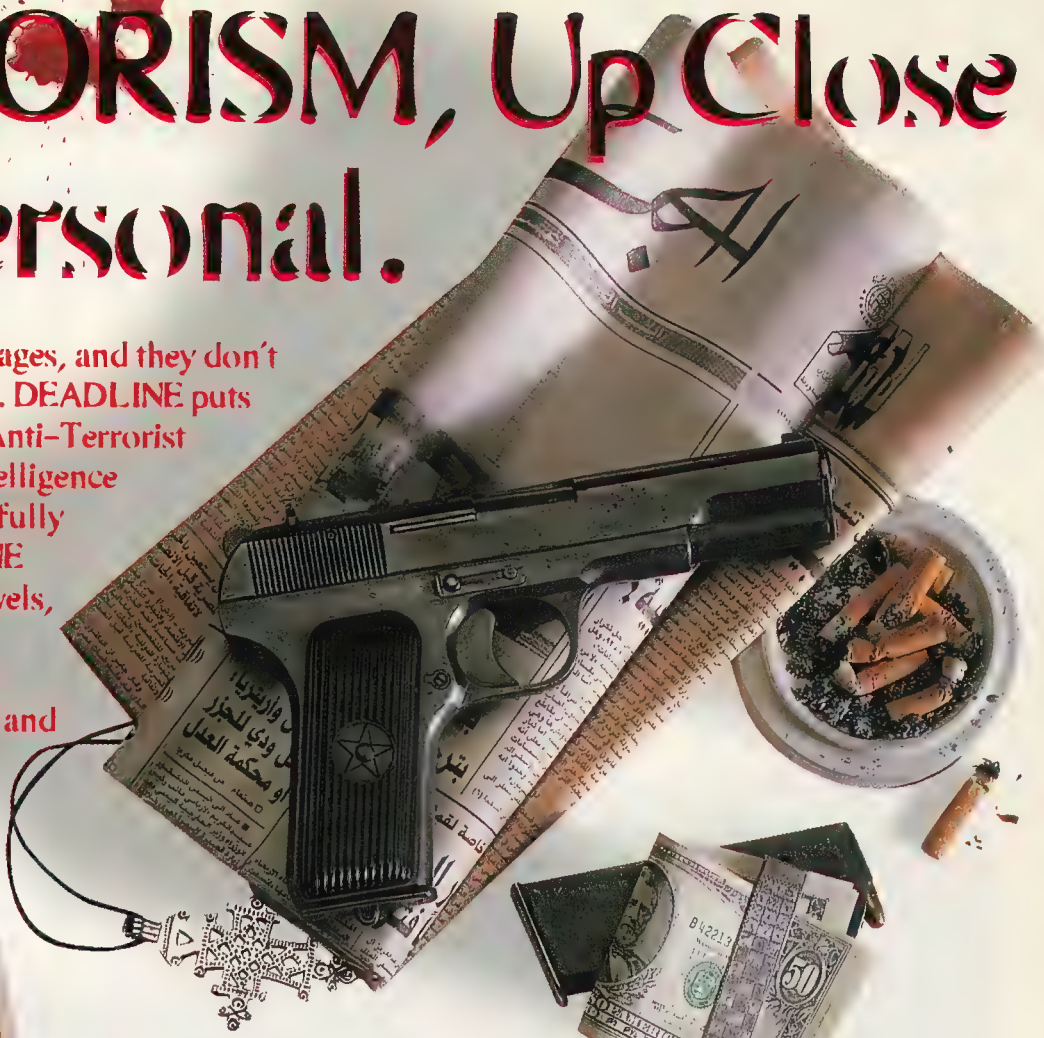

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Reader Service No. 153

by Andy Backer

Solving Stonekeep Even Still

Ol' Unca Andy's mythical Inn and spell of last resort for solving adventure puzzles. If all else fails, just re-boot ! Heh-heh...

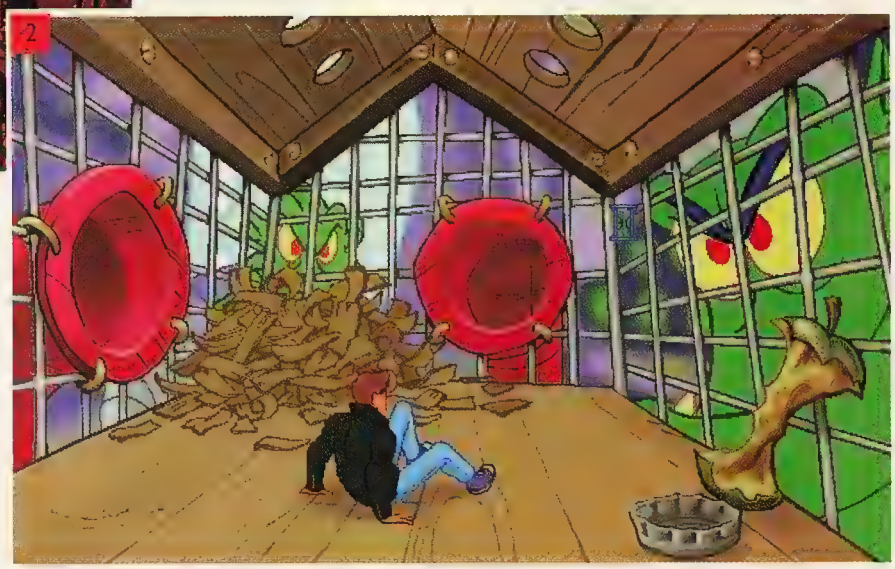
"Joooooo de mannen!" Marc Stynen writes that this expression is commonly used in Belgium to say "hello" and is always followed by general laughter. Let's hope so, Marc. This column could use a few laughs.

Bashed, Battered and Bewildered are still on their quest to find Toaster's treasure cave. I'm a little worried about the boys. Toaster is a pet, but he *is* a dragon, you know. I'm quite fond of the brothers B, but why shouldn't I be? They're my nephews!

Oh, I had to earn their respect. They refused to cry "Unca" until I wrestled each of them to the ground. That was in my salad days, of course. They were small enough then so that I could wrestle all three at the same time!

Their real names, by the way, are Paul, George and John. Their father loved to introduce them as that followed by an introduction to his daughter (Bobbie) as "Ringo." Heh-heh.

[1] Azimuth in Woodruff and the Schnibble of Azimuth
[2] Check out the pile of wood-shavings in Orion Burger



Hot & Not

Stonekeep was again the most popular CRPG in March, while *Ripper* was the most popular adventure.

Ripper is a new interactive movie with inferior writing, directing and acting (compared to *The Beast Within*) but has some interesting and challenging puzzles. *The Dig, Shivers* and *Frankenstein* continue to do well. *Bad Mojo* is a new, bizarre tale about a human reincarnated as a cockroach. It's not going to appeal to everyone, but seems to be attracting a cult of Kafka fans. One fan says the game is "creepy."

Orion Burger's demo is very impressive: superb animations, a funny script, and intriguing puzzles. The hero's dilemma is that he's trapped inside a gerbil cage. He gets out by using a part of a mechanized gerbil to turn the exercise wheel which lifts the exit door. This involves (partially) getting the gerbils to follow him to the wheel room where he has previously released some grasshoppers. I'm looking forward to the full release.

The demo of *Daggerfall* is disappointing, having been prematurely released. The graphics still have the pixellated look of *Arena*. Hopefully, the full release will be more attractive.

The latest strategy game out is *Civilization II*. It's still *Civilization*, but with vastly improved graphics, sound and game play.

Heh-heh Homily

One of the blessings of Internet mail is being able to get messages from *Boots of Re* fans all over the world. I'm grateful that this column is being read by so many of you in so many different countries. I've been fortunate to have been able to visit a number of your different countries during my lifetime and consider myself to be as the Japanese would say: *koku-sai-teki* (of *all* countries).

I've tried to maintain an international ambiance here in the Inn (after all, it exists in ASCII space and isn't really in any one country). I shall continue to try to make you all feel at home here, as if I were everyone-in-the-world's crazy Unca you have to keep locked in the basement. Heh-heh.

Mail from beyond the pail

Chris Oyler writes:

Gotta problem, but let me preface it by saying you're great and you've gotten me out of a few tight spots before. For some reason, I just can't finish Woodruff and the Schnibble of Azimuth. I'm stuck with some super hard nut (yucky) that I can't crack to give to some nut lovin' guy in a tower. Any ideas?

Chris, crack the nut after you've found something sticky (tar) to keep it from sliding and then hit it with a falling star.

Stonekeep Secrets (Part Three)

This is only a partial walkthrough. Press Shift-F8 to bring up the coordinates.

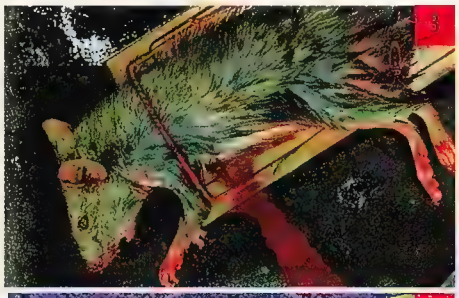
Ice Caverns

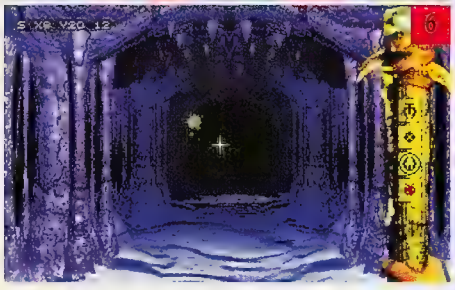
Follow the order of events below to avoid the freeze bugs in the first release. First, talk to Gorza at x13, y11 and then get the parchment he seeks from x22, y20. In exchange he'll give you several runes, the most valuable being Warm Bones. Warm your party to avoid taking cold damage. Fireball the groups of ice-spheres as you come across them, use the Very Sharp Knife on the singles.

Do not warm Enigma (the frozen Elf) until after you've killed the Ice Queen. There are items at x21, y27 (knock down the secret door, and kick the snowdrifts). Warm the frozen Dwarf and he'll lead you to a secret

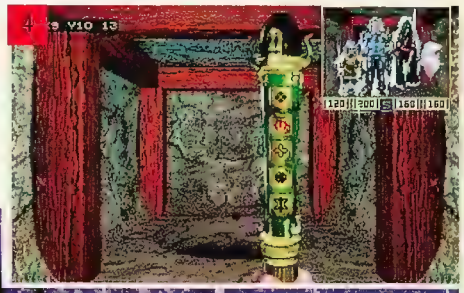
door at x12, y32. Get Cold Fire at x11, y25 and take it to the Sharga at x14, y14. He will open a passage to the north. If you need to teleport to a healing circle, do so before taking the Cold Fire, or it will disappear from your inventory.

The secret door to the Ice Queen's Palace is at x26, y3. Use the Cold Fire on the Queen and then fireball her when you see her





[3] Badmojo is "creepy."
[4] Cast Featherfall before jumping down pits in Stonekeep
[5] Do not warm Enigma (the frozen Elf) until after you've killed the Ice Queen in Stonekeep
[6] Fireball the groups of ice-spheres as you come across them in Stonekeep



again. Take Helion's Orb (once you have it, you'll take no more damage from the cold). The entrance to the Gate of the Ancients is at x31. Y12.

Gate of the Ancients

Go 2N, 3W,13N, W, N, 2W, and 3N. Go west through the spear gate to x15, y9. Pick up the Dagger of Penetration and drink the Life Restore potion. It adds one point to the lowest of the Strength, Health, or Agility stats. Opposite the spear gate go through the illusionary wall at W x12, y9) to the Mana Circle at x10, y8, and the pit at x9, y10. Set a blue teleport circle in this area.

Go back to x 13, y28 (2N from the Ice Caverns entrance). Go 3W, 6N, 1W and push the button at N x9, y22. Then push the button at W x8, y23. Go to x6, y21 and pull the handle down to deactivate a teleport. Go back E to the corridor and turn right. Go 6S, 4W, 3N, W, 2N, E, 5N, 3E. Go south and climb down the ladder. Go 4S, 2W, 4S to set traps. Climb back up the ladder. Go north to the intersection and turn right. Go 2E, 4N, turn left and open the door. Get the Vampyre Rune and drink the Life Restore potion. Teleport to the Mana Circle.

Jump down the pit at x9, Y10. Go up the ladder at x16, y11. In this room are three pits. The South Pit is 2E, 2S from the ladder. The North Pit is 2E, 3N, 1W. The East Pit is 2E, 1N, 2E, 1S.

Jump down the South Pit (x20, y13) first. Then go to x13, y14 and push the W and E buttons. This opens alcoves with Health and Vitality restore buttons at x14, y15 and x12, y13. Go up the ladder at x7, y15. Drop down the pit at x7, y19. Push the button at S x7, y19, but do *not* go north, yet. First, go through E door (x11, y19) for the Wolf Key; then through the N door (x9, y18) and the S door (x9, y20) for other items.

Go up the ladder at x7, y15 to push the handle up at x6, y21. Teleport back to the Mana Circle, jump down the pit and climb the ladder. Jump down the East Pit (x13, y25).

Pick up items at x22, y23. Go 2S, 5W and head south through the door at x17, y29. Climb the ladder at x17, y31. Jump down the pit at x15, y33. Cast the Quack spell on Duck Statue at x13, y37 and go through the passage to pick up items, including the Sphere Rune. "C D I D B D Ducks" translates as "See the Iddy Biddy Ducks."

Go back to the corridor and turn right and climb the ladder. Go W, 2S, 2E, S to the spear gates. Step through the first, go N to x13, y34 and push the button to nullify both gates. Go to N x21, y35 and push the button. Go W and take first right turn. Go through door, to locked door at x19, y20. Use Wolf Key. Get Eagle Key at x22, y15. Use Eagle Key at x16, y5 and get Orb Key (and Stoptrack Rune) from x24, y13.

Teleport back to the Mana Circle, jump down the pit and climb the ladder. Jump down the North Pit. Go N and take Safrinni's Orb. To get out face the W wall and use the Orb on Drake. Step forward. Turn right and follow the passage to the pit. Jump, climb the ladder, jump down the East Pit. Go to x13, y25. Face South. Use the Orb on Drake and step forward through the illusionary wall.

Go to E x13, y18. Have Drake wear the armor. Strip Skuz of anything valuable. Go to x13, y17 and use the Orb Key. Go through the door, turn right and go through the illusionary wall. Go to x 14, y15, turn left and go through the illusionary wall. Open the door and take the Rune Stick and other items. Go back to x13, y16 and go through the door to the Palace of Shadows.

Come back next month for the rest of the Stonekeep walkthrough.

Ciao (an Italian farewell submitted by Giancarlo Pandolfi of Pisa)

I'll be back next month with more funny foibles and fables. In the meantime, request assistance in solving adventure puzzles from Unca at *Strategy Plus* or 71202,3451 on CompuServe (71202.3451@compuserve.com). ■

Chronomaster

Unca picks pockets and peels puzzles

The following hints should provide enough nudges to solve Roger Zelazny and Jane Lindskold's challenging and fun science fiction puzzle-adventure about pocket universes. Pocket universes are fantasy-island type solar systems carved out of space by imaginative designers. They all have individual hidden on/off switches called World Keys. You find these Keys with the aid of a Direction Finder, after first going to Magnetic North in each universe and activating the Resonance Tracer.

Someone has been turning off their keys, leaving the universes suspended in time, like Sleeping Beauty's castle. Korda (armed with bottles of time) has been asked to track down the culprit and turn the universes back on. You are Korda.

Urbs

After conversations with the Terran Regional Representative, Urbs' designer (Charlie Bell), Aurans' designer (Nizzam Rochtar) and the attorney for the late Clia T'riffit (designer of five other pocket universes), you are ready to fly to Urbs.

Items found on a battlefield near the *Fort (a flag and a uniform)* convince the steel warrior guarding *The Sculpture Garden* to leave his post. You can then set up your Resonance Tracer at Magnetic North and activate your Direction Finder. It indicates that the World Key is inside the *Fort* across the ravine.

A scanner controls a bridge across the ravine. The scanner checks that you are properly dressed. *The City of Ground Zero's* War Memorial Museum has part of what you need if you find a crowbar to pry open a box and know how to use what you find. Make sure you also find a cloth and a can of polish in the *City*.

The firing squad in the *Fort* requires the same item. *Reason* and *Bluff* work on Tico Higgins. Your PDA and rock dust will enable you to enter the *Fort's* elevator. Sketch the symbol on the Urbs flag before trying to solve the World Key puzzle. Only *Bluff* and *Respect* work on the Council of the Wise.

Aurans

Go to *Magnetic North* on Aurans. The Jinn in the bottle want fasting dates from the Oasis. The symbols for the dates are in the ships data banks. Find six holidays that include fasting (first look at the word "Holiday"). At the Oasis take the dates and the animal carcass. *Warning! Spoiler follows: The fasting symbols are a cross, lotus, unleavened bread, nine-pointed star, pillar with food, and a flaming man.* After the Jinn have been fed take their bottle and the carpet.

Fly to the *Canyon*. Going near the suspended rocks drops them into the sinkholes (or you can use bottles of time on them). In the Ketter Beast canyon, feed the beast to distract him while you get the tiles and the nomad's turban.

At Skull Bridge Canyon there's a golden needle inside the skull (when you wake, search the skull again).Take the feather from Feather Canyon if you want a canteen later.

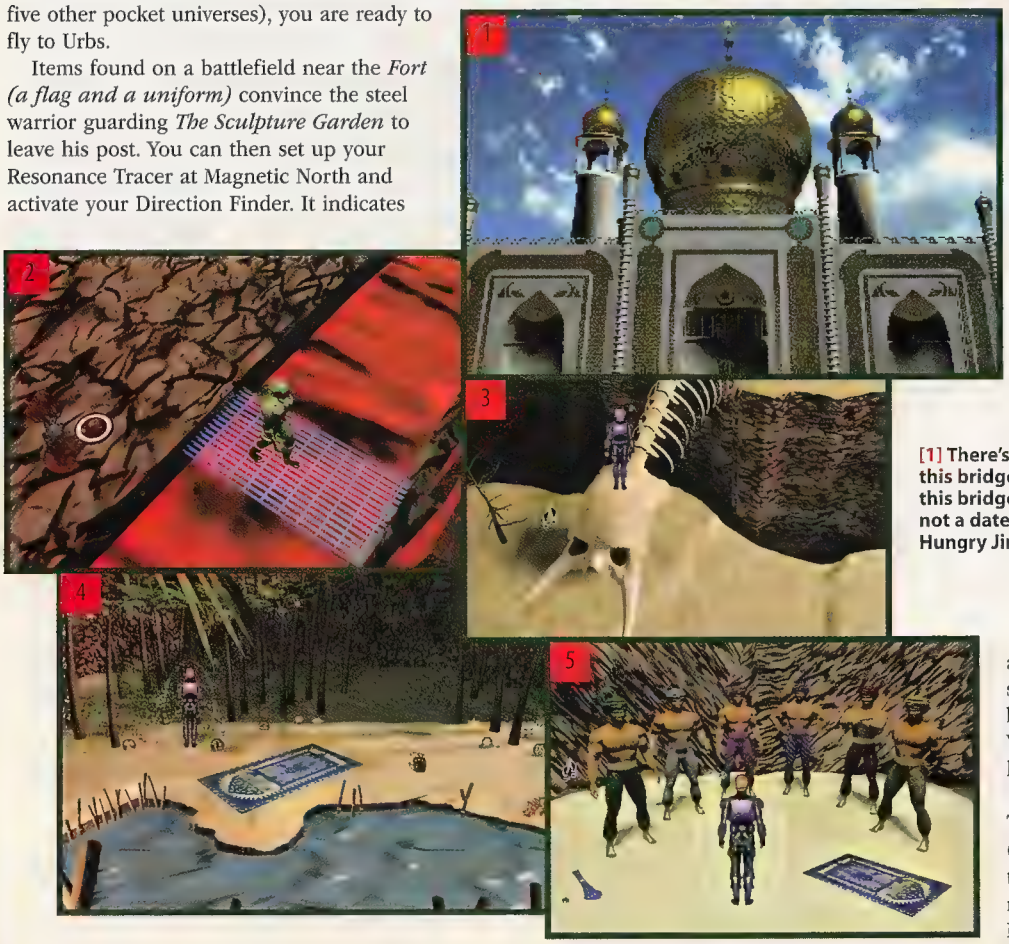
You can talk to the sign in the desert if you use the Universal Tool (one part of the Tool changes, depending on the laws of the particular universe you're in).

The Palace in the distance is only a mirage. Don't try to walk to it, yet. Return to your ship in order to replenish your bottled time (it's done automatically each time you return). Fly to *Plateau Landing* and trade with the trader.

You should be richer by three gold coins, magic sandals and a magic flute after you leave him. Do not trade away your Jinn bottle.

Return to the Jester and fly to the *Caverns*. You can walk across the webs if you're dressed properly (avoid the spider hole). Do not drink from the Transportation pool. In the cavern with the Auran and Urbs symbols. Sketch the Auran symbol after you've cleaned it up a bit. The sketch will help you with the World Key puzzle later. A secret door leads to the Nomad camp.

You can get the sword from the Tough Guy if you dress like a Nomad (repair your costume, first). Entertain the spider with a little Indian Fakir music. Use your sword to defeat the Nomad in yellow and get the magic



[1] There's malice in this palace [2] You can cross this bridge when you come to it [3] You can cross this bridge, too [4] Dates, dates everywhere, and not a date to eat [5] Ever see the movie Six Hungry Jinn?

veil from the belly dancer. Go back to the sign-post and the Palace mirage. You now have the means not to be fooled by mirages.

In the Palace trade a gold piece for a bowl from the poor woman. You can double your gold by gambling with the Magician. Fill your bowl at the pool. It may take a little wisdom to get by the armed guard (and a little knowledge of what to give).

A Ketter guards the passageway to the harem, but you can make it sleepy or take a secret passage to the harem from the Treasury. The answer to the harem beauty riddle is fairly easy if you've ever mixed a martini.

[1] Here's what the Aurans symbol looks like all cleaned up [2] A Harem full of mischief [3] What's at the bottom of the pool [4] And the band played on [5] Don't shoot the piano player

Fortuna

The trick to getting anywhere in this universe is to use the World navigation icon and change planets. *Aura* has no landing zones. *Track* only accepts bets via intercom. Fly to Fortuna's *Landing Bay* .

Your PDA can get you a closer look at the saboteur's ship. elevator goes down three levels into the Casino. The first level has a fountain, bar and slot machines. The second level has crap and poker tables, a stage with a band, a security desk and Service Ducts. The third level has a train to The Old West (and a beggar with a money making proposition).

Getting information from the band involves finding a former member of the band at one of the poker tables, paying his debt and giving back his musical instrument. You increase your odds of winning the slots by using your Universal Tool.

You need a badge to get by the gate to the train (get the Transportation officer to smile for the camera). Ante up in the saloon, but don't get stuck with the pair of eights, draw two cards.

There's nothing at the bar you really need, although a rabbits foot and a drink are marginally helpful. Objects to find include a camera, a vo-decoder, a lockpick, a bucket of paint, and a particle decelerator.

After you've won the card game at the saloon (allowing you to set up the Resonance Tracer) and you've gotten the information you need from the band you'll be able to get through the Service Duct's guarded door

Inside the Service Duct are several locked doors. A screwdriver will take care of one, your PDA another. A third needs a vo-decoder. The last needs a double bent lockpick (use a hammer). The lockpick is inside the saboteur's ship.

Cover the bomb and untie the security people. Don't panic the alien but show him your photo copy of the Transportation Officer's badge. To get the password to the saboteur's ship use your Universal Tool on the tape monitor in the room and press the small button to the left of the console below it. Open the top of the pyramid by pressing one of the other small buttons in the room (you'll want to get your ship out fast).

Behind the locked door that requires a lockpick is the Saboteur. Arresting him cuts the game short. Agree to help him to continue the game.

The World Key puzzle starts with one blip then moves to two, etc. Repeat the patterns to solve it.

The Transportation Officer will raise the landing platform if bribed. This involves disguising a bottle of time as a PDA (paint it).

The Regatta is at Tracks. Agree to the race bet. To win the race you must have gotten a tip about the Regatta from the bartender, spoken to the beggar and accepted his bet. You must also have returned the beggar's share of the winnings and gotten another tip from him as well as giving Milo the particle decelerator you found under a hatch in the Service Duct.

The above hints mostly only suggest one solution to each problem. Many of the puzzles in the game have multiple solutions. Other solutions include moving the steel warrior by firing the missile launcher near the Fort at him. If you have a canteen filled with water from the backwards-walking-pool you can cross the desert to the Palace. Use the feather on the Cook's fire to get a canteen. You can enchant the webs in the cave and sprinkle rock dust on them to make them strong enough to walk upon. Enchanting the mended turban will allow you to ride a twister. You do not have to pay the musician's debts if you play his instrument in the band. The musician's badge will get you through the gate to the train, but it won't fool the alien in the service duct. Drinking the water at the Transportation Pool takes you back to the Jester, something you don't want to do since the cave entrance is filled with rocks. Feed the Jinn poison fruit, grab his turban when he crumbles and say "Juniper and return," to force him back into the bottle.

Unless you've arrested Milo you have more pocket universes to explore. The next one is Cabal, followed by Verdry and Dyce. ■

Stonekeep

Part II: Bringing in the Orbs

The following minimalist walkthrough covers only the major locations and puzzles of the game. It utilizes an undocumented feature of Stonekeep: pressing Shift F-8 brings up x, y coordinates.

Sharga Mines I

The button at x25, y24 opens the room opposite. Inside is a Mana Circle and a Feather-fall Rune. The Silence Rune is in a rubble pile near the chest at x32, y15.

A chest at x5, y19 contains the skull key which opens Karzak's cell at x10, y6. Pick up the Dwarf pick. It's useful for clearing partially blocked passages. A switch at x2, y27 opens and closes a pit at x4, y27. Inside lays a Rune Stick (40 charges) and a Translate rune. There's a ladder out of the pit at x3, y21.

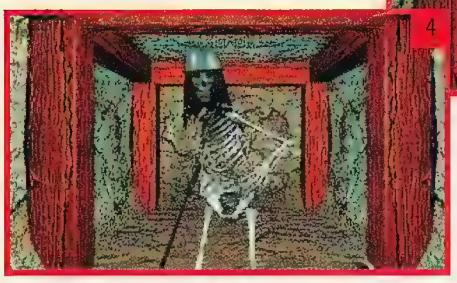
To open the Ettin's chest, cast the Silence spell at the barrels at x17, y27 and destroy it. Inside is Aquila's Orb (heals everyone twice per map) and a throggish key (looks like a mask). Do not wake George and Stump. They can't be harmed.

The button behind the barrel at x24, y32 opens the room with the hidden Sharga archer (x26, y31).There's a button at x14, y6 that opens the door north. **Sharga Mines II** exit is at x14, y3.

Sharga Mines II

Open the spear gate at x25, y21 by throwing objects at the wall switch. Look in the wall crack at x32, y4 to get past the Sharga guard at x25, y13. The button behind the barrel at x21, y15 opens the east wall leading to the Potency Meta Rune (use it to increase a rune's power).

It is permissible to kill Tiny and Big Sharga at x14, y13, but not necessary. The button at x9, y12 opens the west wall. Use the throggish key (mask) to open the door to **Entrance To Temple** at x2, y10.



[1] Don't say I didn't tell you not to wake George and Stump!
[2] Use the Silence Rune on the barrel to silently open the chest
[3] It is permissible to kill Tiny and Big Sharga, but not necessary
[4] Fireballs and crushing weapons are best here

Entrance to Temple

A Mana Circle is at x7, y12. A Skeleton Warrior is at x12, y7 (fireballs and a hammer destroy it). The Wahooka appears behind the door at x29, y14. Keep offering junk to him and he'll eventually accept. The exit to **Throggi Temple** is at x2, y8.

Throggi Temple

Pull the switch at x9, y2 (get the wooden dowel from a barrel in the room) to open the door at x8, y7. Touch the frog's ball at x7, y4 with your Rune Staffs to recharge them. Screw the wooden dowel in the small hole at x8, y15 to turn off the fire trap in the flame room. Get the Flame Rune.

Pull the switch down (and all other switches nearby) at x13, y15. Get Dombar out of his cell to the north. Push the button at (x12, y5) to open up a wall. Keep opening walls until you find the Throggi statue at x18, y4. Take its red eye (Azrael's Orb) and spear. Its green eye is poisoned.

Kill Gorda Karn (the head Shaman) in the room at x23, y5. Take and wear his pendant (it opens up the mask door at x18, y17). Take his Rune Staff. Take the Energy Bolt Rune from the pile of rubble. Get the Shield Rune at x20, y9.

Use the bucket at the well (x25, y14) to get water to douse the fire containing the magical armor ring. Get the Strength and Spoilspell Runes at x27, y26. Give the Mad Shaman (x31, y22) two blue stones for clues.

Pull the timer switch at x20, y28 to open (only briefly) the door at x22, y30. Take the Throg-holding-a-boulder vial. Drink it and then rapidly drink another vial to permanently gain one strength. Screw a wooden dowel in the hole at x31, y28 to reveal the timer switch at x31, y26. Pull it to briefly close the pits.

You do not need to drop down into the pits (cast Feather-fall to do so). They're guarded by three tentacled creatures and contain only a duplicate of the Feather-fall Rune.

The spear gate (x3, y23) opens automatically if you have Azrael's Orb. The exit to **Feeding Grounds I** is at x5, y30.

Feeding Grounds I

Quickly go south of the rolling boulder at x19, y15 and duck into the first hallway. Push the button at x20, y32 to open the passage to the Mana Circle at x18, y33. The Circle Rune (the first half of the teleport spell) is at x25, y19. Two pieces of a rock-shooter machine are at x27, y2 and x13, y8. The third (and final) is at x6, y21 (which can only be entered through a door on **Feeding Grounds II** (x5, Y17).

You cannot safely enter the two glyph doors (x14, y20 or x25, y26) without a Shaman's feather. The first half of the dragon key and the Scare Rune are at x27, y27. The entrance to the Dwarven Fortress is at x12, y23.

Dead Throgs leave keys at x28, y30 and

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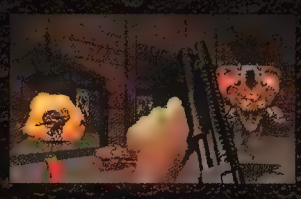

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x12, y17. Use one at x5, y5 to open the door and exit at x7, y3 to **FG II**.

The first half of Feeding Grounds II

There are dragon leg locks at x7, y7 and x19, y11. The dragon's head is at x21, y15. Talk to the dragon. A Mana Circle is at x27, y15. The flint rock is at x27, y12. The second half of the dragon lock key is at x25, y24. Get the Shaman's feather at x10, y5 and use it to safely open the glyph doors on **FG I** (and get the second half of the dragon key).

Do not attack the purple balls. They are faeries. The entrance to the Faery Realm is at x28, y10. Place one to five primroses (from x27, x20) to enter after first having explored the **Dwarven Fortress**.

Dwarven Fortress

Before entering, save and strip your dwarves of armor and weapons. Do not kill the dwarves. Talk to Torin about the dragon at x1, y19. Take the magic throwing ax and the horn laying on a table in Torin's room. Go to the blacksmith at x2, y8 and get the magic chisel. Return to **FGII** and chisel the right side of the flint rock (turn to the right to find the piece). Go back to the **DF** and give the flint to the blacksmith. Give him the two halves of the dragon key. Improve your weapon skills on the Glory Stone at x3, y8.

The armorer is at x5, y7. He has the key to the armory at x5, y16, but will only give it up if you kill him (don't bother). The library is at x1, y15.

At x16, y3 is a Throg spy in the shape of a dwarf. Kill him. Go through the illusionary wall and pick up a Tripler Rune and others. There's a healing fountain at x25, y5.

Talk to Torin again and he will assign you to kill the undead creature at x31, y4. Afterwards, Torin will allow you to take the Homing Rune from his treasure chest (talk to him).

To set up a teleport, use the Circle Rune to make a blue circle on the ground. Use the Homing Rune to return to that location. To get back to where you used the Homing Rune, step into the blue circle and use the Homing Rune again.

Go to Karzak's room (x11, y17) and ask him to join you again. Go back to **FGII**.

[1] Touch the ball with the Rune Stick to recharge it
[2] Dead Throgs leave keys
[3] Chisel a piece off of this Mother-of-all-Flint Stones
[4] Listen when the Dragon speaks
[5] Primroses here open up the Faerie Realm

The second half of Feeding Grounds II

Release the dragon (unlock the locks). Pick up Skuz at x3, y26. There's a second Mana Circle at x15, y32. The entrance to the Ice Palace is at x5, y27 (don't go there until you've been to the Faerie Realm. The third piece of the rock shooter is through a door at x5, y17 to **FGI** (at x6, y21). Give Dombar the three pieces and he'll give you the rock shooter.

Faerie Realm

Exchange items with various faeries. Sweetie (x32, y3) wants the Daisy Chain at x11, y11 for a Clover that allows you to see Trolls. At x29, y2 exchange a Stone, Skull, Foxglove, Primrose, Gladiola and St. John's Wart (x34, y28) for various songs. Exchange a Mushroom for the Quack Rune scroll. Murph (x9, y1) will give you the Slow Rune scroll. Give the fiddle from x5, y2 to Binkle at x4, y5 for his drawers. Pick up a jester's cap and iron spike at x5, y19. Give Giggle (x17, y11) the Book of Poems (from x35, y8) for a Gold Key. Give Surly (x13, y18) the Faerie Cake (x5, y2) for a Silver Key. Snort (x2,y15) needs Wild Thyme (x18, y4), Moss (x18, y7), and an empty Decanter to make a Brew. Take the Brew to Chuckle at x21, y15 for another Jester's cap. Chuckle (x8, y12) will also exchange the Parchment (x30, y13) and Charcoal (x34, y28) for a Portrait and a Shirt.

Use the Gold and Silver Keys in the snowdrift to open the Queen's Gate. To get past the invisible barrier, place five Primroses and then travel the circular pathway back to the barrier two times.

The Troll gate is at x25, y17. Winkle (x2, y18) will exchange The Tome (x25, y22) for an iron spike. Winkle (x4, y13) will exchange the drum (x27, y31) for another Jester's Cap. A Horseshoe Medallion is at x27, y25. Wear the Medallion, drawers, shirt and cap before fighting the trolls. Place the iron spikes in the same square as the party to prevent Troll attacks. The Invisibility Rune is at x18, y31. A Rune Stick is at x14, y27. Search the area near the body of the large, nasty Troll for the Orb of Yothsoggoth.

Look for "Part One" in last month's Computer Games Strategy Plus and "Part Three" in this month's "Boots of Re". ■

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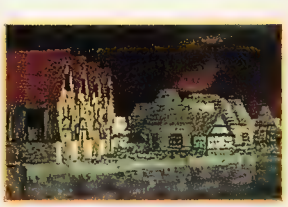

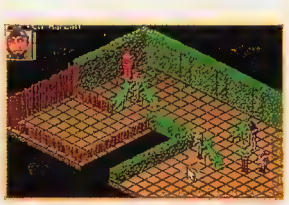

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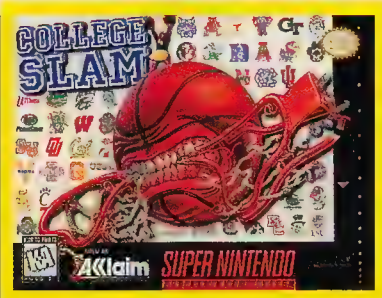

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by Steve Wartofsky

Looking beyond the visible horizon

Hardware dreams for the power hungry

Typical situation right now: you're a flight sim fan, with a reasonable amount of money. You have a 100MHz Pentium, a good 64-bit (internal) graphics accelerator card without any special 3D hardware features, maybe video hardware assist, though that's not critical for you. You have options you think about regularly: "My motherboard will accept a CPU replacement up to 166MHz – I could go for a 133 right now without blinking an eyelash, but then that's three hundred bucks I could be saving for a 3D graphics card down the line. Direct3D has just arrived from MS, and who knows who's going to do the best job of getting good hardware support out first for it. My guess would be anyone using S3's upcoming Virge and VirgeVX chips, though Nvidia's got some good early deals and promises of support. On the other hand, while a P6 now doesn't look in the least tempting (no full 32-bit PC-based OS with fully 32-bit game design exists today), I just know that if I splurge for a fast CPU and/or video card soon, I'll find out in two months that the P6 has just gotten the full Intel MMX treatment, and MS' new OS (codename "Cairo") is ready to ship sooner than they let anyone guess it would be, and provides full multimedia support and is a damn sight faster than Win95. In six months a P6 could really look like a good idea, but then again, I still like Falcon 3.0 and a bunch of older sims, and I fear they'd go nuts on such hardware."

"Please – someone out there – release, or at least announce the possibility of – the ultimate simulation for the P6 with full hardware/software 3D acceleration support and enough detail to keep me happy for about five years, and I'll start saving today if I know it's on the way."

The names and time frames could all be changed slightly, but the dilemma would remain: we're really at the tail end of one generation of both hardware and software (including operating system – despite all the hoopla and visual makeover I still feel Win95's really the last "patch" on the original idea of Windows, with a few NT-like aspects debuting to warm the crowd up for what's to come. Less than a year after its official release, it already feels like it's time to move on, from a flight sim fan's perspective. I just don't see any major added value to performance in the genre from what Win95 – with whatever multimedia additions – can do). Problem is, what the future holds is murkier than it's ever been before. There's no clear sense of where the main, dramatic performance breakthroughs will be in the next few years, and what those breakthroughs will net us in terms of the quality of flight and air-combat simulation.

Things are also profoundly in flux in very fundamental ways in the structure of cutting-edge hardware. We're ready to abandon older bus structures, newer, multiple-CPU motherboard architectures are developing but it's not clear whether their utility will extend beyond certain kinds of server functions, DVD is about to give us virtually unlimited mass storage – and the biggest ringer in the whole bunch is that a real quantum leap beyond where we are now will involve a virtually complete abandonment of what's popularly called "legacy" hardware and software. The big thing holding back The Next Move continues to be backwards compatibility. If players could once and for all assume they'd keep the old P166 for all the previous stuff and move on to the next generation of hardware with a new system virtually incapable of running old software, it would help speed things along, I'm sure. Look at the success of the Playstation and Saturn, in other areas of gaming, as an example of what I'm talking about.

[1] The right balance of cockpit and object detail – for now [2] How do you define great graphics... and good information? [3] Figuring out where the CPU cycles should be dedicated in a sim will always be an art, not an exact science

Flight and air combat simulation fans who are really dedicated to the genre of simulation – in whatever form it takes, including fantasy, mech, system, etc. – would, I suspect, prefer a move towards quality rather than a move towards making it all cheaper. There has been some brou-ha-ha over the imminent release of DVD, since rumblings have suggested that some audio/video publishers will use the extra space not for improvements in audio and video quality, but simply for MTV-style "extras" alongside the core software being bought (i.e. DVD as glorified CD+G). Just as I suspect the latter approach would help to kill DVD as a competitor with the CD and the laserdisc in music and movies, I suspect efforts to pro-

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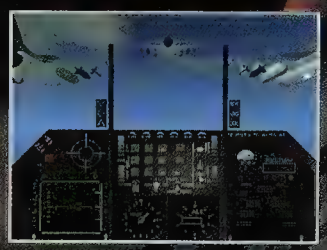

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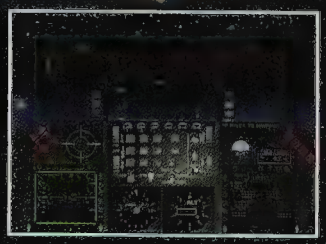

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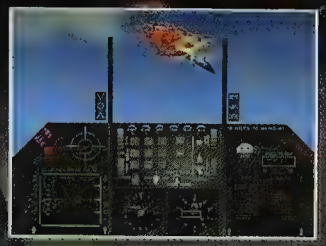

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vide "cheap" 3D and multimedia extensions would risk failure with avid simulation fans. We'd prefer to pay a little more for some dramatic improvements in performance and depth of software design, – and consistent overall quality – instead of getting hardware/software that'll do one thing, and only that thing, really well. In other words, the Playstation/Saturn audience and the simulation audience are in many ways diametrically opposed in their hardware expectations. Shoot for the high end to succeed if you really want to please the core simulation audience.

None of this is meant as an implicit attack on the recent spate of pretty but comparatively "lite" simulations we've seen. They all have their strong points, many of them in areas that are evolutionary rather than revolutionary (multi-player, sound, texture mapping, etc.), or in areas that are more meaningful for a general audience than for the more focused. But – if the various responses I've seen on a number of online services are any indication – these simulations are not addressing some core needs for the core audience.

What are those needs? Varied as the colors of the wind, but here are some basics: first, graphics so good you don't even think about them; we need to get to a point where the areas of visual competition many designers are caught up in right now have become so standardized there's no need to make them the center of attention any more. Once graphics have gotten so good they're taken for granted, this or that simulation can then stand out entirely on the merits of the work of the simulation itself, instead of just on the eye-and-ear candy.

Second, an across-the-board commitment to a full, force-based physics model for flight representation. Even the best efforts in these areas on current PCs are relatively rudimentary in what they're actually modeling. We'd like to see the complexities of actual, physical reality, including all the variables affecting the density and flow of geographically-related atmospheres computed, alongside all the variables affecting the more familiar forces of thrust, weight and lift on the wing. It's not just a question of whether or not the model is offering six degrees of freedom, or whether it's got a numerical rating for the "influence" in a generic sense of this or that atmospheric factor; someone really interested in simulation per se wants to see a full, complex, dynamic environment in operation, and then wants to see a plausible representation of the way a particular set of objects and objectives (player and opponent aircraft, in a combat sim) would perform in that environment. Impossible, you say? Yes, on current hardware. Next year or two? We'll see. Without the commitment to trying, we'll never find out.

[1] This begins to approach the kind of instrument realism every serious flight sim fan dreams about [2] Maybe it's not photorealistic yet, but it runs smoothly on a Pentium and still looks cool [3] Flanker in a stall/spin – novices and experts alike need more in-sim demos like this [4] A new definition of Fly By Wire(s)

Third, further work on dynamic AI for allies, as well as ground- and air-based opponents. This is one area where air combat simulation has actually been pretty sophisticated all along, but for all its sophistication, the actual performance of units in the air and on the field continues to be – mostly – suspect. Given the right amount of computing power, someone could probably really go to town with a system which would not only dynamically generate where opponents would show up, but how they'd respond based on issues of supply, time in training, resources behind them, morale changes in response to the ongoing situation, etc. Furthermore, it would be truly fantastic if the player's accompanying flight and wingperson could start to take on a more than statistical nature, and be present during a mission as plausible, independent agents; this would start all the way back at ground school, move into the mission and back out of it during debriefings and subsequent missions, and would be the best place where any kind of role-playing/character elements in the design could be fleshed out (so to speak). Spectrum Holobyte has already started to move in this direction with Top Gun; let's see where it could really go with the right kind of computing power.

Finally, a fuller representation of the actual ballistic performance of any weapons and weapons systems brought into play, as well as more detail in the representation of the systems used for late-20th/21st-century electronic warfare. With a fully-SVGA cockpit and full animation of all instrument systems in same, again – with the right computing power – designers could go to town giving the player a series of subtle, sophisticated simulations-within-simulations to work with. Some hints of this are already present in the work of, say, Apache and EF2000 and Su-27 Flanker.

We'll get there, eventually – and plenty of good work remains to be done with the next few releases in the current hardware environment (Electronic Arts' continuing Jane's series, EA/Origin's Apache Longbow, DID's next combat sim, Mission Studios' Jetfighter III, Spectrum Holobyte/MicroProse's European Air War, to name a few). But the next big step in simulation is going to be speculative for a good while longer. Meanwhile, enjoy multi-player: it's the next small wave in air combat simulation design. Crunch Out. ■

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by Ben Chiu

Disengage

Techniques on how to properly run away

Congratulations, you've made it to the end of the beginning! This month we cover the final topic of our stages of air combat basics - Disengage.

This is the end?

Although the Disengage Stage is usually placed at the end of the list of air combat stages, it should be understood that just because it's listed last, it doesn't necessarily signify the end of an air combat confrontation. While you can choose to disengage to end combat at that time, you can also choose to disengage for other combat related reasons. We'll discuss each separately. Without considering mission objectives, there are only four ways to resolve an air battle: you shoot your opponents down (and you're left flying), you go down in flames (and your opponent is left flying), you both go down (usually the result of a mid air collision), or neither of you get shot down and you both go along your merry way. In terms of desirability and difficulty, obviously, shooting down your opponent is most desirable; however, while it is usually relatively difficult, it isn't always the *most* difficult, as we'll discuss in a moment. On the other hand, getting yourself shot down is definitely the easiest, but it's also the most undesirable (at least for your side). Midairs gain you a "kill" of sorts, but you're no longer flying and likely failed your mission, so for all intents and purposes, your "game is over." This leaves getting away while your opponent is still able to fly. Sometimes this is mutually agreeable, and sometimes it isn't. It's when your opponent isn't cooperating (why should he?) that you'll find disengaging the most difficult, not to mention dangerous.

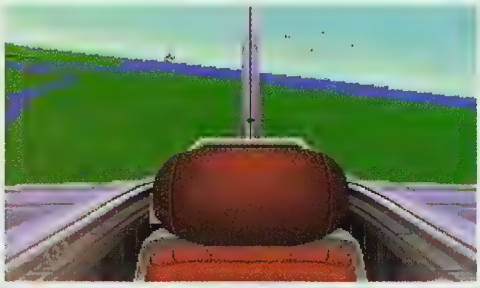
However, there are some basic concepts that can help increase your chances. Before we talk about specifics, let's nail down what Disengage actually means.

What it is

In air combat terms, to Disengage means to put as much space between you and your opponent as you can, so you're outside of weapons range. While this would suggest that at some point before this you've been *within* weapons range, some strategists don't list that as a prerequisite. Some argue that you can't disengage unless you've already been engaged. If you avoid a battle by maintaining your distance from your enemy by never engaging (or in other words by remaining disengaged) you never enter air combat, since it takes two to tango. While I understand and appreciate the thoughts behind the sentiment, I have to disagree. I know we're talking about semantics here, but for the record, we're talking about the stages or air combat. If you enter the Detection stage of air combat, you can skip to Disengage stage even though you've never entered within weapons range (Attack Stage). By entering the Detection Stage, you're clearly within the air combat stages, so everything else can be analyzed as such.

Run away!

No matter how you classify it, for our discussions, we'll assume you've already entered weapons range and now wish to leave for whatever reason, and your opponent is still flying (after all, if he isn't, the battle is over). I know this goes directly against the *TACA* Commandment telling us not to break off an attack once it has begun; that commandment still stands – that is, unless you have good reason to do otherwise. What criteria you use to base your decision to disengage on can be anything from tending to your mission objectives (such as assisting when your bomber group is under attack) all the way to being damaged and/or out of ammo. (Bummer!) Regardless of what your reasoning is, let's talk about ways to get away.



◀ **You don't have to be defensive to want to disengage from your current battle. While you're chasing down a fleeing potential kill, your bombers are getting cut to shreds. Remember your mission goals**

Damaged and out of ammo - I can think of better places to be. Disengaging is sure to be at the top of your list of things to do, however, the only sure fire way to get out of here is to avoid getting in this situation in the first place. Sorry, but there are no magic moves ▼

▲ **In WWII, the use of superior speed was the basis of the successful "Hit And Run" tactics used by the Allies. Basically, you make a high speed head-on pass with the enemy and continue flying away before he can turn and shoot at you (disengage). When at a safe distance, they'd turn around and do the same thing again, and again, until the enemy was no longer flying**

The need for speed

The most basic way to disengage the enemy is to just fly away from him or her. If your airplane is much faster and/or you posses a great deal more E (energy) than your enemy, this can be accomplished easily. This leads us to one of the reasons to disengage without ending the battle right then. Okay, I know this sounds confusing. Maybe I should

explain this a bit further. Ending combat can mean shooting the other guy down – and that's everyone's main goal – but that isn't what we're talking about in this instance. In WWII, the use of superior speed was the basis of the successful Hit And Run tactics used by the Allies. If you're not familiar with this, basically you make a high speed head-on pass with the enemy and continue flying away before he can turn and shoot at you (in other words, you disengage). When at a safe distance, you'd turn around and do the same thing again, and again, until the enemy was no longer flying.

This way and that way

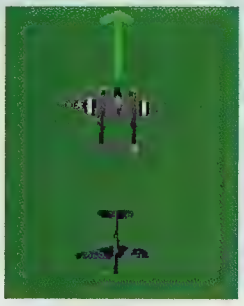
If your aircraft does not possess a distinctive speed advantage or you do not possess a large E advantage over your enemy, it makes disengaging much more difficult. Pilots refer to what happens next affectionately as "turning and burning" – dogfighting. This is where your fancy flying pays off or gets you killed. If you've got a bandit on your tail, the best chance you'll ever have to get away from him is when the nose of his airplane is 180° off of where your nose is pointed. However, to get to this highly desirable position usually means you've had to bleed off some E in the turning T2T position with lots of E to spare and leaves your enemy E bank overdrawn.

Also try flying where your pursuer will lose sight of you. This means flying below his nose and under his airplane. If he loses sight of you and becomes disoriented, you'll increase your chances of getting away.

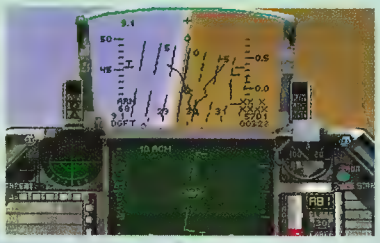
Spin to win

Intentionally going into a spin sounds stupid, but it sometimes works against AI opponents and real opponents. The drawback is that if it doesn't, you'll end up at a lower altitude with very little E. Make sure you know how to get out of a spin again.

It may sound stupid but intentionally putting your aircraft in a spin in a sim like PAW (whose flight models will spin if you sneeze too hard) can sometimes help you disengage from your pursuer. The drawback is if it doesn't, when you recover you'll be at substantially lower altitude with a net loss of E



The best chance you'll ever have to get away from a bandit is when the nose of his airplane is 180° off of where your nose is pointed (Tail to Tail). However, your success depends on your E and the proficiency of your pursuer



Here I've squandered all of my stores and failed to kill the enemy. I've brought the fight down to the deck. This gives my pursuer something else to think about - the ground. If he's not paying attention, he'll eat dirt. It's a slim shot, but you were probably out of options/ideas way before this point. Sometimes it pays off. What have you got to lose that you haven't (realistically) lost already?

Even when you're equipped with the best training, strategies, and information, disengaging the enemy may not be possible. Therefore, it's always preferable to avoid getting in this situation in the first place. But you already knew that!

that got you there in the first place. Therefore, your ability to speed away safely is greatly reduced. Herein lies the dilemma. If you keep your E high by making gentle turns, you'll most likely get your tail shot off. On the other hand, if you're pulling big-time Gs, when you achieve the coveted 180° T2T (tail to tail) position you're too slow to get away before the bandit turns and gets you in his gun sights again.

What to do?

Unfortunately, there isn't any magic maneuver that will get you out of all situations every time. I wish there was, but there isn't one that I know of. However, I can pass along a couple of tips. Do something unexpected and you'll increase your chances. Beware, unexpected doesn't mean something suicidal, like a tail slide! Ultimately, you want to do something that'll put you in that magic 180°

I'll take the low road

Finally, I'll pass along a tactic that should only be used in final acts of desperation. If you ever find yourself out of ammo, airspeed, and ideas, bring the battle to ground level. Many times the enemy won't follow you down. If he doesn't, you can get away. If your pursuer does follow you down on the deck, you can hope that he isn't a very good pilot. I've been in this position many times and less skillful pilots will auger into the ground because they're concentrating on shooting me down rather than watching their altitude. Just fly around, decreasing your altitude a little at a time. Before you know it (or rather, your opponent knows it) s/he'll be too low and a ball of fire on the tarmac. Of course, sometimes you can help opponents towards their demise. One trick is to do a split-S very close to the ground. Pull your throttle all the way back and drop your flaps on the way down. This will allow you to decrease your airspeed so you can squeeze the bottom of the loop and so you won't hit the ground. If your pursuer is too preoccupied with following you, by the time s/he catches on, s/he'll be flying too fast and will fly into the ground (doing that gear-up landing with too much vertical velocity thing). It really works. Just learn what the minimum altitude you can pull it off at before you battle test it. Try it if you're in a jam.

Realities

The brutal realities are that even equipped with the best training, strategies, and information, disengaging the enemy may not be possible without some "assistance" from your opponent. In other words, he usually either has to screw up or want to let you go. It's really that simple. Of course the fancy flying you use to dazzle him is intended to get him to screw up. However, if you're flying an inferior aircraft that is damaged, etc., it will decrease your chances of making it home, let alone completing your mission. Aren't you glad you're only flying a sim? ■

by Ben Chiu

Wing Commander IV

Busting the rebellion

Wing Commander IV is what *Wing Commander III* should have been. It's the definitive *Wing Commander* in my book – a must buy. While *Wing IV* uses an improved *Wing III* combat engine, much of what you've learned in *Wing III* is still valuable since they are still very much alike. For those of you who haven't played *Wing III* (and no one blames you), here are some basic tips to get you going. Later we'll discuss how to complete the first few missions at the Ace level if you're still having trouble.

Power management

One of the hardest things you'll need to do in *Wing IV* is manage your power. Each ship can only generate a limited amount of power, so you need to distribute it among the ships systems as required. It sounds simple enough, but what makes it so difficult is that you'll need to be switching power around in the middle of battle. In addition, what makes matters worse is the awkward keystrokes that you have to use. I have my FLCS and TQS combo programmed to mimic these keystrokes, but it's still a distracting chore. My best advice is to set your power distribution ratios before you enter battle. Lock the engine level at 25% with <CTL-] > so you'll retain maximum speed and redistribute your damage control allotment to zero and lock it there. You'll only need this if you need to repair something. In the mean time, you can use the extra power to quicken the re-generation of your shields and weapon power.

Kill, kill, kill!

Getting hits on enemy ships depends on your marksmanship skill. Therefore you should make the ones that do connect count. Press <G> to toggle on all guns and <CTL-G> to synchronize them to fire at the same time. This is so you'll maximize the damage you'll inflict when you do connect. To help increase your hit ratio, lock on each target using the <L> key. This activates the I.T.T.S. (Inertial Targeting & Tracking System). This will compute the amount of lead needed to hit your target.

Run away!

While blowing things up is the main thrust of the game, to make things a little more interesting, these "things" naturally don't take kindly to your shooting at them, so they shoot back at you. Defensive strategy is very important if you want to survive (and see the rest of the film clips).

The key to staying alive in combat is to not over-fixate on one target. It's okay to stick with one target until he turns into little pieces, but the mistake many pilots make is not breaking off their attack when they're being shot at. If you have a bandit on your tail, immediately make a hard turn and keep turning. First thing to do is check your damage status and make repairs or redistribute energy as required while jinking. Novice pilots tend to fly in a straight line when they're looking at their instruments. Don't make this mistake or it'll be your last.

Your biggest threats are missiles fired at you. There are three strategies to avoid getting hit by them: fool them with decoys, out run them with afterburners, and/or out turn them. Ideally, you'll want to use all three of the above, but sometimes it isn't possible. Start by dropping a decoy. That alone will sometimes break its' lock. Check your radar and count the yellow blips. You don't need to be accurate. You just want to make sure that another missile hasn't locked on you. If there's more than one yellow blip, drop another decoy and kick in the afterburners. If your Missile Lock Indicator is still glowing (or if you're out of decoys), your last chance to avoid taking a missile hit is to out fly it. This is done by keeping them off to your left or right (keeping them "abeam"). Look at your Radar Display and keep the yellow dots in the 3 o'clock or 9 o'clock pie shapped sections.

[1] Each ship can only generate a limited amount of power, so you need to distribute it among the ships systems as required. Lock the engine level at 25% so you'll retain maximum speed and redistribute your damage control allotment to zero and lock it there so you can use the extra power to quicken the re-generation of your shields and weapon power [2] Toggle on all guns and to synchronize them to fire at the same time to maximize damage with each hit. Activating the I.T.T.S. and it will compute the amount of lead needed to hit your target [3] While blowing things up is the main thrust of the game, defensive strategy is very important if you want to survive (and see the rest of the film clips) [4] Your biggest threats are missiles fired at you. If you're out of decoys, your last chance to avoid taking a missile hit is to out fly it. This is done by keeping them "abeam" (perpendicular to your flight path). Look at your Radar Display and keep the yellow dots in the 3 o'clock or 9 o'clock pie shapped sections. Missiles are fast and turn pretty tightly so you really have to stay on the ball

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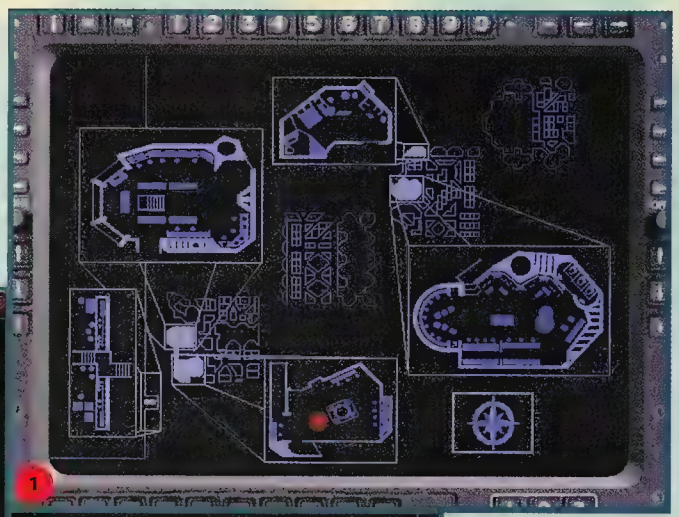
Missiles are fast and turn pretty tightly so you really have to stay on the ball. However, they don't carry much fuel, so you'll only have to keep them abeam for a few seconds.

Shipside

Use the ship map <M> to avoid having to search for people to talk to on the ship (and watching Blair walk down the hallways). A light will blink in any room that has someone to talk to. A red indicator signifies someone you need to talk to, and a blue indicator indicates optional film clips.



[1] When using the ship map, a light will blink in any room that has someone to talk to. A red indicator signifies someone you need to talk to, and a blue indicator indicates optional film clips [2] Pressing <Alt-O> during flight brings up the flight options and cheat menu. You can select a flight model that is more like the X-Wing /TIE Fighter style (banks in turns), change graphic detail levels to suit your computer, enemy skill level, and invulnerability [3] The only sure fire way to beat Maniac in your mock encounter is to use the fact that the battle won't begin until you press <1> and accept his challenge. Use this time to configure your weapons, target lock and line him up in your sights. Press <1> to start the battle and start shooting. Press <Y> to match his speed and you'll emerge victorious. It may not be fair, but c'mon, he'd do it to you if he could!

Mission tips

Check your power settings after every autopilot. For some reason they reset after some and not others. There doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason for it, so you just have to check every time. Remember to save games right after completing each mission too. Finally, pressing <Alt-O> during flight brings up the flight options and cheat menu. You can select a flight model that is more like the *X-Wing /TIE Fighter* style (banks in turns), change graphic detail levels to suit your computer, enemy skill level, and invulnerability.

You vs. Maniac

Annoying as he is, Maniac is one hell of a proficient pilot. The only sure fire way to beat him in your mock encounter is to use the fact that the battle won't begin until you press <1> and accept his challenge. Use this time to configure your weapons, target lock and line him up in your sights. Press <1> to start the battle and start shooting. Press <Y> to match his speed and you'll emerge victorious. It may not be fair, but c'mon, he'd do it to you if he could!

Aborted trip to Confed

Right after sparring with Maniac, you face your first pirates in *Wing IV*. Hit the afterburners while waiting for your weapons to reconfigure. Refrain from ordering Maniac to break and attack. These pirates are easy pickings to up your Kill Board totals.

Mission 1 - Hellespont - Protect transport

Again, refrain from ordering Maniac to break and attack. Protect the transport by killing the enemy ASAP. When Eisen tells you to break off the attack and follow the fleeing ships, go to full afterburner and follow them. Don't worry about keeping your distance and if there are two bandits left on your radar, you can safely kill one of them (more Kill Board fodder) as long as one escapes.

Mission 2 - Blow up enemy frigate

The easiest way to complete this mission is to transfer all power (except engine power) to your shields, lock on the transport and fire a full salvo of torpedoes <B> at it. The extra shield power will keep you safe long enough to achieve the torpedo lock.

Mission 3 - Tyr System - Recon ground complexes

You can complete this mission in two ways; the easy way, and the hard way (for maximum kills). The easy way is to do a hit and run. Kill the first pirates you encounter on the way down to the planet with some missiles. When you're on the planet, kick in full afterburners, drop decoys and jink when missiles lock on to you. Cycle through targets until you lock onto the ground station. Switch to your camera and snap away. Don't leave the area before taking the required amount of pictures. A quick glance at the picture counter (on the lower left of the Weapon Loadout display) will keep you abreast of your progress. A voice will acknowledge when you have enough pictures to move on to the next waypoint. If you want to add to your Kill Board totals, you can complete the mission by taking out all of the enemy ships. The key is to take out the ground turret first.

Mission 4 - Escort ground extraction

Save your missiles and take out the first two pirates with guns. When you reach the planet the ground turret is the most dangerous/annoying so take it out first. Send your wingie after the approaching pirates to keep them busy so you're free to destroy the turret. The rest of the mission is fairly straight forward; avoid missiles and kill pirates (with missiles if you need them).

Mission 5 - Masa System - Destroy SpaceLab defenses

Choose a bomber for this mission. It has more missles and stronger shields than any fighter. Cycle through the targets and kill the Ace level pirate first. The remaining bandits will be easy to mop-up.

Mission 6 - Intercept convoy

Kill the two Banshees, set energy priority to shields then destroy the cruiser with torps.

Mission 7 - Intercept Eisen

You have to choose whether to remain loyal to Confed or turn renegade. If you choose the Confed route, you need to kill Vagabond, otherwise, you need to kill Minor and his Confed buddies. From here on out, your missions depend on which path you follow, so you're on your own.

Have fun, and may your missiles always find their targets! ■

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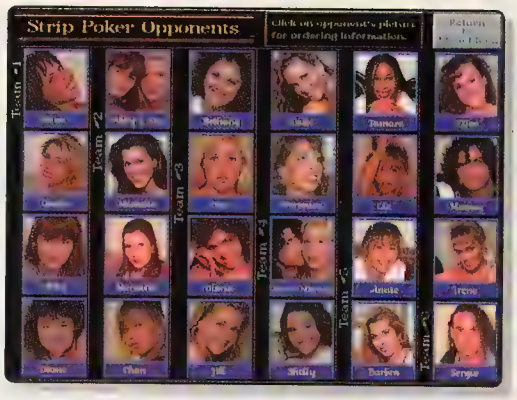

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IndyCar Racing II

Part II: Dealing with traffic and qualifying

When you can string together ten minutes' worth of solid laps and have a grasp of where each turn begins and ends, it's time to practice dealing with traffic. Set the computer opposition to 90%, skip practice and qualifying and try racing from the back of the pack. At 90%, you'll certainly have fast guys, but the slower cars should be quite passable and technically speaking you'll have the most power of anyone on the track. If you do manage to crash (and that'll happen a lot), simply hit the infamous <SHIFT-R> key combination and start again.

If you've come to understand the proper line around the Michigan track through Preseason Testing, running with traffic may well give you the first chance in quite some time to use the brakes. Braking, like the other three driving actions (acceleration, right turn, left turn) should be performed smoothly, methodically, and in moderation. In *ICR II*, sudden braking, especially when combined with any turning motion, can and often will provide horrendous results. It is critical to remember just how fast 230 mph is, and make allowances for slowing down well in advance of another car. Likewise on road courses, where going into a sharp corner too quickly and then attempting a turn under heavy braking will end anyone's day. Nothing will annihilate a good lap like going too hot into a corner, then performing all sorts of corrective measures before you can turn and get going again.

Monitor what the computer guys are doing, where they brake, where they turn in, and always remember to allow at least five Michigan laps for the tires to come up to temperature and begin sticking to the track. The computer guys have an advantage over us mere humans in this department, as they seem to have hot tires right away, but there's nothing you can do about it, except to remain consistent and wait out the cold tires. While we're on the subject, it is vital to ignore the pace lap on any oval or road course completely, because here tire temps will actually *drop*. This is not consistent with real life pace laps, where drivers will veer back and forth heating their rubber, but you've got to go with what you're given.

If you're tucked right behind another car, he'll be "breaking the air" for you. You'll be picking up speed the closer you get, allowing you to "slingshot" past

This guy is prime for the passing once we hit the straight. This is approximately as low on the track you should be in the middle of a Michigan turn

Maneuvering through traffic is probably the toughest element to master for any up-and-coming *ICR II* driver. It is important to note that there are no magic tricks, and although it may sound strange, don't forget the story about the tortoise and the hare. Steady and controlled will always work over flash and dash.

When passing for position, particularly when entering a turn, *always* make the pass on the inside. It is a Very Bad Thing to be stuck between the wall and another car as he swoops out from a turn; you'll be crashing or braking, and neither is desirable. Have patience when coming up on a group of slower vehicles, and wait for them to sort themselves out. Driving three or four abreast will give you very little track to work with, and simply demands too much accuracy. Most of the race-ending errors I see come from making moves the driver really had no business attempting in the first place. If you keep plowing into the enemy, hit the <F10> chase camera for a less constrained overview of what's going on, and check out a replay every now and then. You'll soon see that crashes are most often of your own creation.

After you've moved ahead of an object car, try to "slot" back in directly in front of him. *ICR II* computer opponents seem to recognize your existence much better when you're right on the racing line; remaining off it may mean one of them will turn into you in their haste to out-duel you into the next turn.

On road courses, you should see that a few corners on each track (The Carousel at Elkhart Lake and the Turn 12 hairpin at Detroit, for example), are simply easier for you than the computer drivers. I've found that the Turn 8-9 combination at Long Beach

Passing cars in the strangely easy Long Beach Turn 9-10 combo. The author's offensive looking machine is painted green with white sparkles. Note in the third frame how the Penske driver has become fearful and shot well off the beaten path to the outside wall. Note also the change in positions from frame one to four, all in the span of five seconds

is a great place to make hay. If you're' hot on the tail of a car or two, stay left as you approach 8. It's a snap to outbrake the bad guys here, and they'll be far off to the right. Hug that outside wall, then shoot toward the inside wall at the crest of Turn 9. Generally, the computer cars opt for the outside line around 9, and in some cases (see screenshots) they seem to become deathly afraid of you, and veer wildly to the outside wall to avoid a collision that was never going to happen. Meanwhile, you are on the inside and by now should have a great view of a wide open front straight. On the throttle, you'll be getting ready to pass even the cars that went into that set of corners well before you did.

Perhaps spots like these weren't properly tuned by Papyrus to give an equal playing field for the computer guys, but whatever the case, they are there to be taken advantage of. This sort of thing was certainly more noticeable in less advanced sims like *World Circuit*, but there are areas where you can usually pick up some ground on every track.

Another way to save road course time is to make judicious use of grass. Yes, that evil green stuff will throw you into a spin if you don't deal with it effectively, but corners can be cut (did someone say "Detroit?"). As a matter of fact, grass is usually peachy if you coast over it; just don't blip the throttle or tap the brakes on the way through and you'll be fine.

Qualifying

In qualifying, it just doesn't matter what you do before or after that one hot lap. In this regard, and particularly on ovals, I recommend hitting very high speeds on the warm-up lap(s), taking the car in wa-a-ay too deep, then slamming on the brakes and skidding through the turns. Getting as much tire squeal as humanly possible through every turn will ensure that your tires have heated up somewhat for the lap or laps that count.

However, you'll want to take it easy during the first part of the final turn before the green flag. Slow it down, and make sure the car is running straight before hitting the throttle, in order to get as much momentum as possible before taking the green. And remember, keep the fuel load low, perhaps a gallon or two less than the default Qualifying set-up supplies. If you've run out of methanol just after scorching past the checkered flag, you've done well.

There is some argument as to the benefits of this chassis vs. that chassis, various engine advantages, and other option settings available from the Main Menu. Maybe it's just me, but I don't see much of a difference in performance, although bumping up the outside temperature should, in theory, produce a warmer track and therefore faster qualifying times.

The race

If you've followed my advice to this point, there's not a whole lot of driving adaptation needed for a full race. You've been practicing in race mode with a breakable car for some time, so things won't get much tougher than what you've already experienced. It will have been ingrained into your very soul that the slightest misjudgment may very well find you picking up car parts. Psychologically anyway, you'll have an advantage over someone who's been dinking around with indestructible equipment and a clear track.

Patience is the key. Although you'll undoubtedly want to pick off as many positions as possible in the opening few turns, simply because everyone is so close together, remember that there'll always be another time, another lap, on which to negotiate that perfect pass. Work on building a rhythm, and you'll find that as your tires heat and fuel load lessens, the whole procedure does get easier. ■

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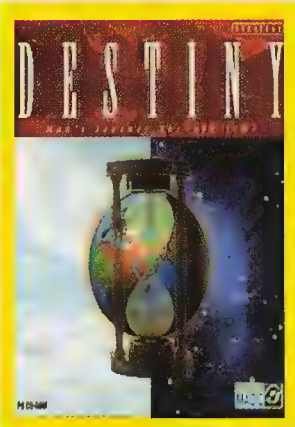

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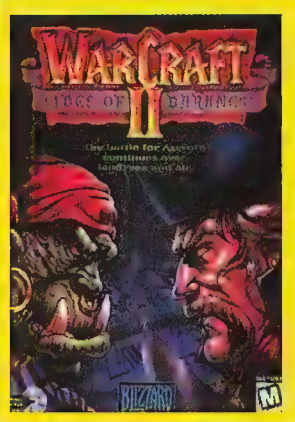

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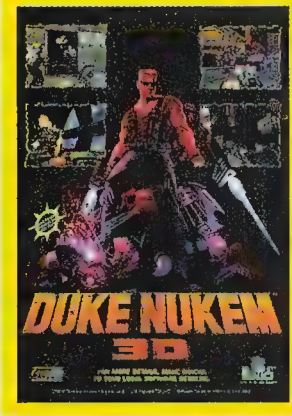

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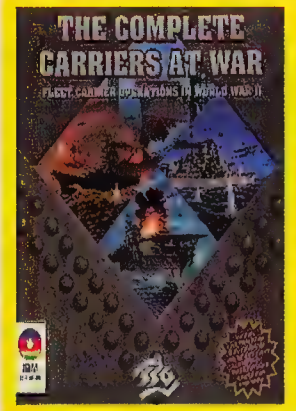

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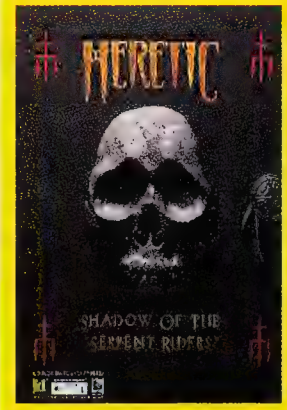

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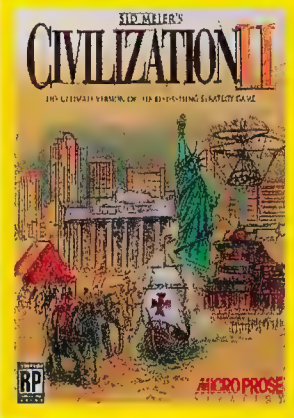

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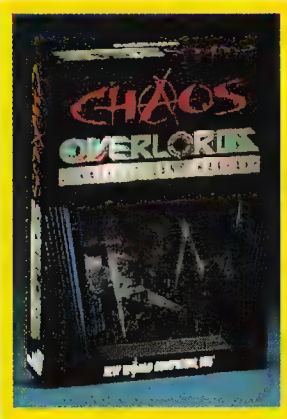

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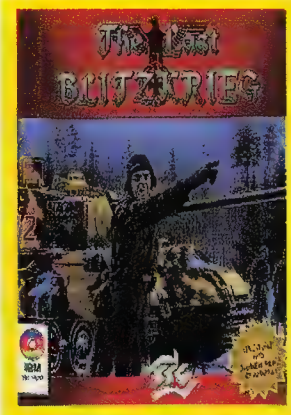

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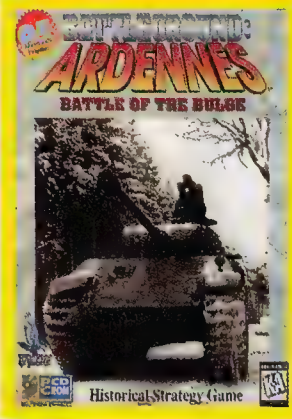

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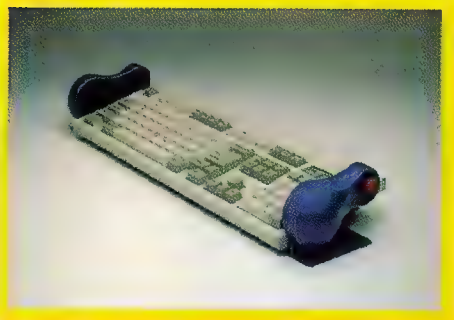

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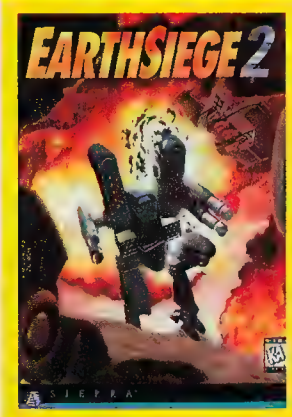

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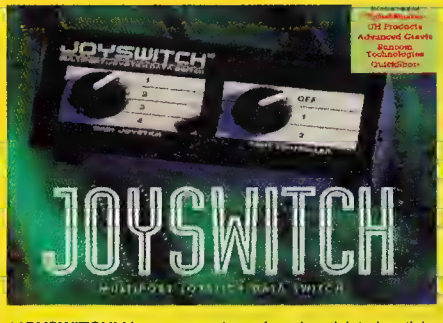

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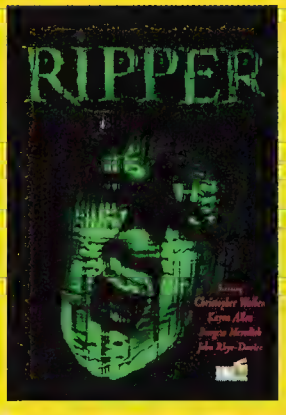

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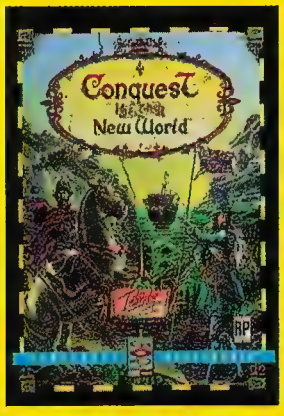

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Hexen

Part II: I put a spell on you...

After *Crusader: No Remorse* I expected that my next assignment would be a letdown. Little did I know what the folks at Raven and *Hexen* had in store for me. Fear, dread and excitement appear in equal parts whenever I don my armor and take up the serpent staff. *Hexen* is a cunning game, a game not to be won by brute force alone, but by agility, guile and pure brainsweat.

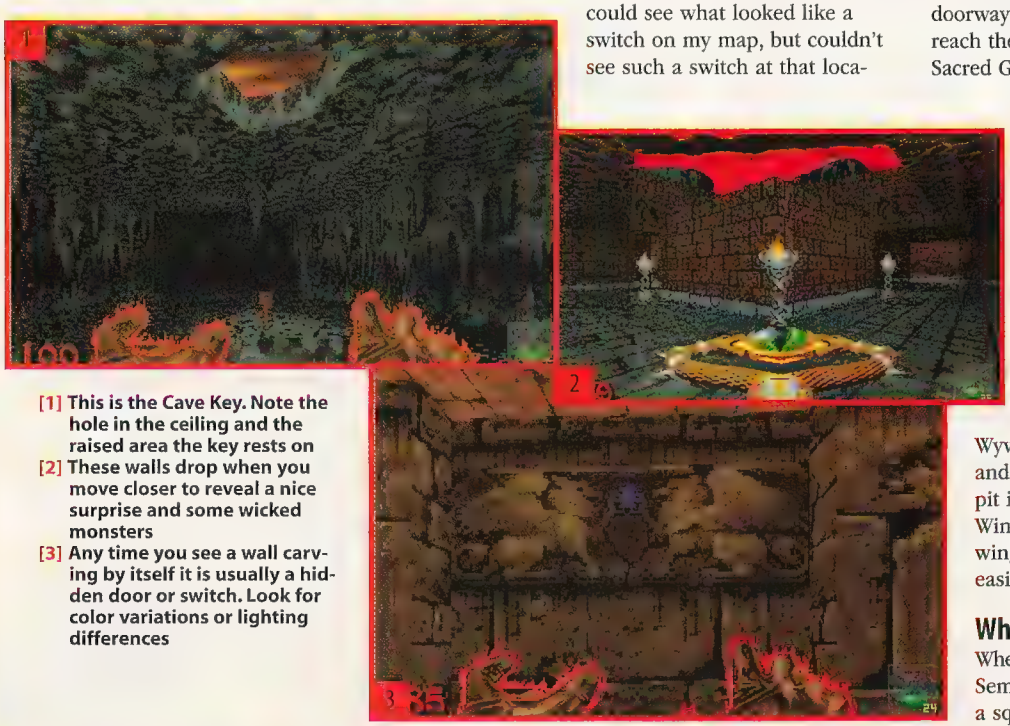
I am the Keymaster

Shadow Wood, the second hub, caused me (and judging by the messages on the net, many others) more trouble than any other hub. After wandering around in Shadow Wood itself, the Wastelands, and Darkmere, you may find yourself scratching your head and wondering where the blasted cave key is and what to do next. The answer lies in the Greco-Roman temple in Shadow Wood.

Walk into the temple and find the central room where the six masks are. Some may be lit, but others will be dark. The lit masks indicate switches that have been pulled in the other levels of this hub. The visages that the masks bear indicate where those switches are found. So, for example, if a swamp-like mask is darkened, you will know to seek that switch in Darkmere. Don't worry if switches in areas you have already visited are dark. Until you have been to the Caves of Circe you cannot get to all of the switches.

Look at your map and note the corridors leading to this room. Proceed to the north corridor and walk in front of the large black mask there. Now that you've activated a whole host of traps, return to the entrance to the temple and run left. You will notice a flight of stairs has risen. When you get to the top of the stairs make a sharp right (running is OK, you don't have to jump). A short passage leads to the room that holds the Chaos Serpents that have been pelting you. Kill them (if you haven't already) and hop into the tiny hole and pull the switch. Grab whatever you want from this room, you won't be able to return to it. Go back out the way you came until you are at the stairs again. If you hop down you should find another set of stairs going down. Follow them. You will go through a door that will shut behind you, but don't worry, keep walking. When you find a room with lots of loot walk slowly into the room and stop at the entrance.

After the floor and ceiling have had their meeting of the minds you have two choices. You can walk/jump along the ledge to your left and throw a switch on the wall that will fill the pits or you can follow the ledge to the right into a room with a portal that leads to – tahdah! The Caves of Circe. In my run through I could not find the switch on the wall to close the pits. I could see what looked like a switch on my map, but couldn't see such a switch at that location, nor could I trigger one. However, I was able to gather up most of the goodies with some judicious jumping.



[1] This is the Cave Key. Note the hole in the ceiling and the raised area the key rests on
[2] These walls drop when you move closer to reveal a nice surprise and some wicked monsters
[3] Any time you see a wall carving by itself it is usually a hidden door or switch. Look for color variations or lighting differences

Right makes might

The easiest way to deal with the Caves of Circe is to use the old "rule of right" that CRPGers have held to for ages and always hue to the right-hand wall and only make right turns. Wandering about normally will leave you confused and frustrated. Eventually you will come upon a suit of armor in an alcove off of a medium-sized room. Make sure you have your track shoes on because as soon as you cross a certain line WHAM! You're raspberry jelly. I was able to retrieve the armor without using the boots, but save yourself the aggravation and use a pair. There aren't that many occasions that call for that much speed.

Getting the armor makes the Cave Key available. Find the room where you hear water dripping and look for a staircase leading up. If you follow the stairs you will now find the Cave key in this room.

Ask me no secrets, I'll tell you no lies

After you have all the keys and have thrown all the switches go back out to near where you first entered the Shadow Wood. There is a large pillar with some steps you have to jump up. Near the top of the stairs is a now-open doorway leading to a portal. Go through it to reach the Sacred Grove. You must solve the Sacred Grove if you want to reach the secret level on the forth hub.

Go through the portal and kill all the ettins quickly. If you don't do so fast enough they will regenerate ad infinitum. Killing them lowers a stairwell in the center that leads to a switch. Throw it, grab some goodies and leave. You can return later and stock up, if you like.

At the end of the Hypnostyle you will meet the first of three evil dudes in *Hexen:* the Death Wyvern. Use an Icon of the Defender and run along the ledge lining the lava pit in the final room until you reach the Wings of Wrath. Don them and take wing to fight the Death Wyvern– it's the easiest way to take him out.

What's all the hub-bub?

When you have gotten into the Heresiarch's Seminary on the next hub you will find a square walled-off area of the central

chamber on the end opposite where the planetary chart is. Walking near the walls will trigger them to fall, revealing a random assortment of goodies and tough monsters. You must run inside the walls before they rise to get the loot and can then "use" the walls to lower them again. You can repeat this process any number of times but a certain amount of time must pass before the walls are reset. Each time you do this there is roughly a five percent chance that a Krater of Might will appear as one of the items.

When you have solved all the puzzles in the various chapels and return to the Seminary the Heresiarch will appear. He can fire purple blobs at you that explode, he can fire bouncing orange homing globes or green fire. When he's really hurting he will summon Dark Bishops. If you run down one of the staircase-corridors you can snipe at him with relative immunity, ducking to one side whenever he fires at you. It helps if you can leave ten or more poison flechettes at the top to chew on him. Whenever you see small purple shooting stars circling him don't bother firing; he's invulnerable and anything you shoot will come back to "haunt" you. Once he's dead return to the area behind the now-moving pillars where he appeared and take the elevator down. This will lead you to Deathwind Chapel, the secret level for this hub.

When you find the Daemon Codex in the Forsaken Outpost a portal will open behind where you found it that leads to Desolate Garden, the secret level for Castle of Grief if you pulled the switch in hub two.

Yet another Heresiarch

When you at last have the Axe Key make sure you have everything you want from other levels because once you enter that room there is no going back. This is a wicked showdown, especially because of a bug in the scripts. You have to leave a few of the Chaos Serpents alive for a few minutes in order for the next script to kick in. Also, make sure you jump onto the throne when picking up the Icon of the Defender. If all is going well a bunch of Dark Bishops will appear. Once these are dead you will face another Heresiarch. He is much easier to deal with than the last one if you run into either of the side rooms where the Bishops were and go up the stairs. He won't enter the room and most of his retaliation will detonate harmlessly in the stairwell while your shots nail him. Those poison flechettes really come in handy. Warriors can hang here and practice lobbing flechettes at him, then bob and weave while hacking after he's weakened.

[1] This switch is VERY hard to find. Look for gray trees and hack
[2] I like to hit Bishops with a repulser disk and then flame them. You get scads of these disks so don't worry about wasting them
[3] You can use mushrooms like poison flechettes. Handy for those spur of the moment parties

Zedek, Menelkir and Tradactus, Attorneys at Law

I was surprised to find that the Incarnations are – well – wimps. Even the Priest was an easy kill. Korax, on the other hand has six (eight? *lots*! I was too busy beating on him to count) arms and fires every single ranged attack there is at you in multiples, one for each arm. (Use those Icons, use them *now*!) He springs traps, *hordes* of monsters appear (I was beginning to feel like Conan in a movie done by Cecil B. DeMille) and when he doesn't like how things are going, he teleports away. Not only that, you have to kill him *twice* before he's really dead.

The Vivarium isn't really a secret level, but you may only enter it so long as you haven't been in any of the three tombs yet. Some interesting traps and a boatload of booty await you.

Hold onto the precious Icons of the Defender and only use them in dire straights. I used one when facing the room full of Chaos Serpents and the Death Wyvern at the end of Hypostyle. I was glad to have the rest when I faced "His Royal Nastiness" Korax in the final showdown.

Facing Korax is a good time to use those Maulataur dolls you've been saving. They really put a hurtin' on ole Korax and will probably kill a lot of the other monsters you let loose, letting you rest and recuperate. My general strategy was to power up an Icon, blaze into the room firing everything I had at Korax and then trigger a Maulator when my Icon started blinking and run like heck for one of the side passages to reload on manna, then repeat.

That's all for now. If you have any questions you can reach me on GEnie at Sam.Baker, on CompuServe at 72662,3066 and on the Internet at 72662.3066@compuserve.com. I am the walrus, goo goo g' joob. . . ■

The Hubs and Levels:

Winnowing Hall

Seven Portals
Guardian of Ice
Guardian of Fire
Guardian of Steel
Knight's Crucible (Secret level)

Shadow Wood
Darkmere
Caves of Circe
Wastelands
Sacred Grove (Secret level)
Hypostyle

Heresiarch's Seminary
Dragon Chapel
Griffin Chapel
Deathwind Chapel (Secret level)
Orchard of Lamentations
Silent Refectory
Wolf Chapel

Castle of Grief
Forsaken Outpost
Gibbet
Effluvium
Dungeons
Desolate Garden (Secret level)

Necropolis
Zedek's Tomb
Menelkir's Tomb
Traductus' Tomb
Vivarium (Secret level)
Dark Crucible

Crusader: No Remorse

Part II: Silencing the opposition

A truly sad thing happened yesterday. I finished *Crusader: No Remorse*, the best game to have graced my hard drive in I don't know how long. Each mission introduces new threats and traps, and the missions are longer and the layouts are more devious the further in you go.

When all is said and done, these are the weapons I chose to keep and why: The RP-32 holds lots of rounds in its clip, is better at long-distance shooting and has a high rate of fire and is my favorite weapon. The shotgun is good for close range, but the autoshotgun is *marvelous*. The RC-88 is the only weapon that fires fast enough to keep grenade launcher dudes and others from being able to get off a shot. While it stinks at long range, you can nail guys through guardrails when other weapons would keep hitting obstacles, or fire blind. If only it had more than twelve rounds in a clip.

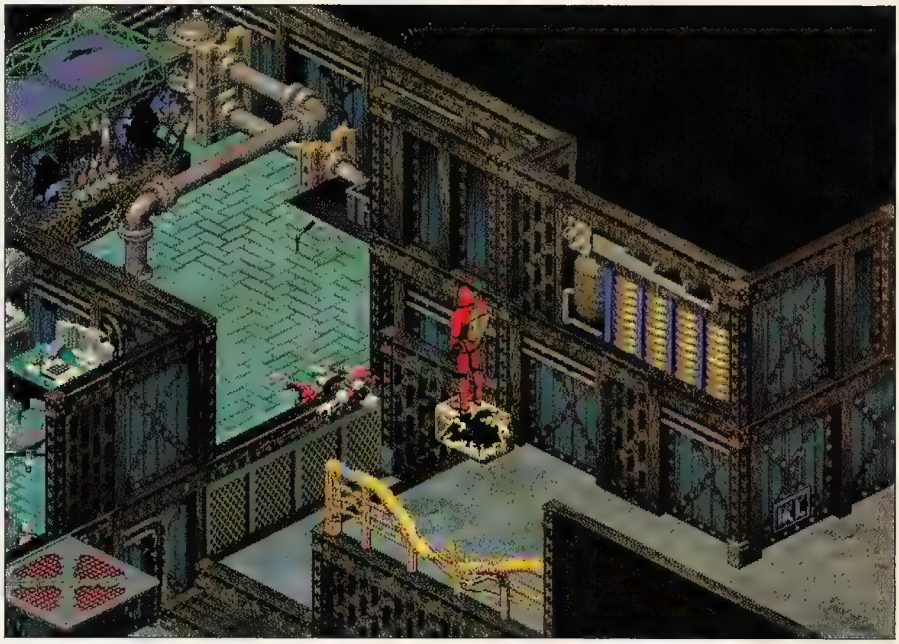
The UV-1 is the only energy weapon I kept and it is great for target rich situations when you don't have time to aim and don't want to worry about blowing yourself up. The UV-1 can kill those annoying terminators and autoguns with one shot, saving your precious hide. No other energy weapon was really worth keeping. The environment gets increasingly hostile on the later missions and many times your energy needs are too great to dissipate any energy firing a weapon.

The RA-2 is handy when you want something dead *now*. . . As long as you don't care what the place looks like afterwards. It's a good weapon to use on the large "baby AT-AT" style robots because of its high rate of fire, which may allow you to do in the grenade-toting 'bots without collecting a round, but you'll have to be careful where you point it if you don't want to frag a footlocker by mistake.

The GL-303 is a one shot pass-wall spell that can open nearly any door and will kill even the toughest robot in three shots. Like the RA-2 it can be tricky to use in tight passages, but when you need to kill something in one shot, the GL-303 is the weapon of choice.

Nothing more need be said about most of the human denizens of *Crusader* except for the grenadier and his big brother, who wields an RA-2. The grenadier can be recognized by his kneeling posture. He will not rise nor close with you. He just lobs grenades every chance he gets. His brother will chase you down, flinging those wicked RA-2 rounds about promiscuously.

If you don't need ammo for your GL-303 or RA-2 nor credits, go ahead and give them some of their own and be done with it.



Think before you blast away. I'm lucky this box is still standing or I wouldn't be able to get to that cute little footlocker on the other side of the drop

Otherwise, you will need quick reflexes and a shotgun-class weapon. If you can, find out where they are and then back off, shooting in their direction. When you hear the characteristic grunts of an injured guard, hold down the trigger until he dies. Another alternative (which also works on the grenade launching robots) is to fire one round and roll. Then roll back and fire again. Personally, I'm for fragging them. Life is too short.

In mission twelve you will find two elevator pads working in tandem; they appear to be stuck. While you may have to jockey a bit to achieve a suitable position, you can raise them by hopping from one to the other. Each time you land on one elevator pad it will rise, allowing you to eventually work your way up to the next level. Just before getting to the top, be sure and take out the guard patrolling there so he doesn't nail you while you're imitating a rabbit.

No you can't always get what you want

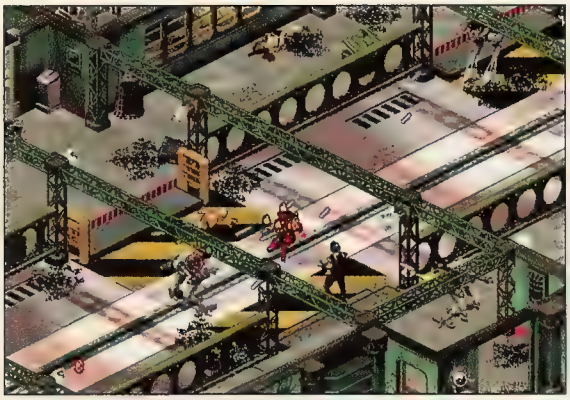
When you get back to the base after mission twelve, be sure and load up, as this is your last chance to talk to Weasel and buy goodies for the rest of the game. When you're all set, take a deep breath before getting on the telepad. You won't get another until the game is over. Also, be sure and take the weapons you really like with you. When I came back after finishing thirteen, I found that my trusty armaments locker had been shot to blazes. So far as I can tell the locker has been trashed before the start of the level, so you won't be able to get back any weapons you've left there.

Missions thirteen and on separate the quick from the dead. As soon as you open a door on mission thirteen you will be inundated with UV-1 toting guards. Certain doors lead to the guards' quarters. These doors become obvious as a guard will pop out every five seconds (and that is *without* a red alert in progress). Unlike some places in *CNR*, you can go through these doors and clean out the nests. Doing so will cut the flow of guards from that dorm to a trickle, once every thirty seconds maybe.

Ah, ah, ah, ah, staying alive

After you complete thirteen you will find a *very* warm welcome waiting for you back at the base. You might call this mission thirteen-and-one-half. Scads of terminators, and a large assortment of the other mechs want to party hearty with you as soon as you walk out of the telepad room,

Your four goals on this mission are to: 1. Stay alive. I suggest running a lot, at first. Take pot shots and keep moving, keep moving, keep moving. Above all, don't get target fixation and try for one last shot to take out a 'droid. Be assured that several robots and guards will be lining up on you. 2. Ammo up.



Home, sweet home ain't so sweet since the Consortium trashed it. Cleaning out your base is one of the worst firefights in the game, so be ready when you finish mission thirteen

Grab all the gusto you can. There's lots of ammo and special devices lying around and in footlockers. 3. Check your mail. Good old Maxis has sent you a video-mail detailing how bad it *really* is. 4. Get the *heck* out of Dodge (or Chevy, or Honda). You don't have to kill everything here, though it is fun.

Mission fourteen is a looooooong one, but eventually, you will come to a door with a force field that has two locks; one yellow and one green. Save *before* messing with this door! The locks must be activated in the correct order, or the force field will not go down. Green comes first, then yellow. Be sure and save before trying, just in case.

In the next room you will see a stack of three footlockers that are inside a laser fence, which activates once you walk inside. Only the top locker has anything in it; the others are just for show.

Mission fifteen is the last, longest, and most difficult of them all. Hopefully you're loaded for bear, 'cause there're *lots* and *lots* of bears. If you have any intentions of trying to duke it out with the traitor in the end game, conserve your RA-2 and GL-303 ammo. Don't let either drop below fifteen clips or you will wind up short when meeting "Miss Manners."

Approximately halfway through the mission you will find an open lift that takes you up one floor. Sometimes this lift gets stuck, so if it stops try reloading a previous save and trying again. Stopping in mid-ascension is not part of the plan.

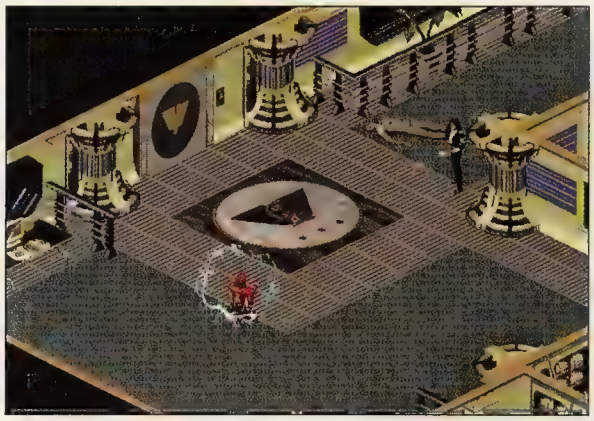
That ain't no way to treat a lady

The elevator dings, the doors open and you stop. A strange silence pervades the room and everywhere you go there are dead bodies. As you guessed, the queen bee herself has been through here on her way to the exit. Make sure you check out the room directly opposite the elevator. The room is full of goodies and you will certainly need them.

Let me be blunt. You don't have to kill her to leave space station. All you actually have to do is get past her and go out the door. Origin, in their mercy, will let you out the final door without picking up the final keycard. The easiest way to get by Miss Manners is to lure her back near the elevator and then boogie past her to the exit. The whole station explodes, so it's not as if she's going to live happily ever after.

On the other hand, she *is* annoying. . . *but* she takes one humongous amount of killing, thirty magazines from the RA-2 or sixteen from the GL-303 (after hitting her with five or more spider bombs and another five land mines and probably eight detpacs). Thirty clips for the RA-2, this might not be such a bad proposition, if you could carry that many. With its high rate of fire, she won't get many shots in return and if you can stand near the batteries and can manage a quick grab, you should be able to survive. As soon as you switch to the GL-303 though you will get the stuffing knocked out of you during the pauses between rounds. Given a little luck and proximity to more ammo and energy cubes you should be able to do her in. After much reloading, I decided to declare victory and go home.

If you have any questions you can reach me at Sam.Baker on GEnie and at 72662,3066 on CompuServe. Adios and good hunting.



Vargas looks like an angel, but kicks like a mule. Killing her is a job for masochists. Bid goodbye and boogie on down the road

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Reader Service No. 149

by Steve Bauman

Take me out to the cyber-ballgame

Preview
Front Page Sports Baseball Pro '96
Sierra

Sierra's *Front Page Sports Baseball* has a bad rap. There's no question it had problems when it was first released. Irony of ironies, it was released on the day that baseball players went on strike. It was rushed out the door and looked it – there were numerous bugs and things didn't quite work right. There were enough problems with the original game that most of its amazing strengths were overlooked. It was the first baseball game with 3D stadiums and a career mode that allowed the gamer to take over a team for more than one season, drafting and trading players to attempt to build a dynasty. It had plenty of other innovations, but its problems tended to overshadow the good.

Baseball Pro '96 is a refinement of the original game (one could argue that it's the version that *should* have been released in 1995, rather than the rushed original in 1994). They've been compiling lists of changes and improvements that gamers have wanted since the first game came out (they even have an e-mail address for you to send mail to the team, baseball@sierra.com). One feature in particular, a hall of fame for career mode, came from user input.

The first thing you'll notice about the game is that it's a native Windows 95 application; each part of the game occupies a separate window, allowing the user to resize them for optimum viewing and/or performance. Despite this, it doesn't use any of the common dialog boxes, opting instead for a *Front Page Sports* family look in both menus and interface (for better or worse).

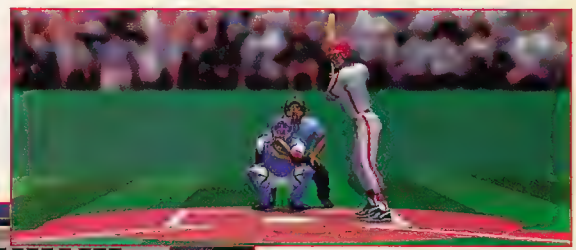
Most of the original features that made the game unique remain. The game still does not generate results via statistics (every other game on the market uses stats exclusively), but rather via individual player ratings. Ken Griffey Jr. Hits 40 home runs in a season not because he did the year before but because he has a home run rating of 93 (or whatever arbitrary number is chosen to represent serious power). Greg Maddux leads the league in ERA not because he has each of the last three seasons but because he has extremely high endurance, command of his pitches and great control. This has caused some problems with some players who desire absolute replication in their simulations, as ratings allow for much more variety (and are subsequently much more interesting – if you want to replay a season exactly as it was played the season before, what's the point?).

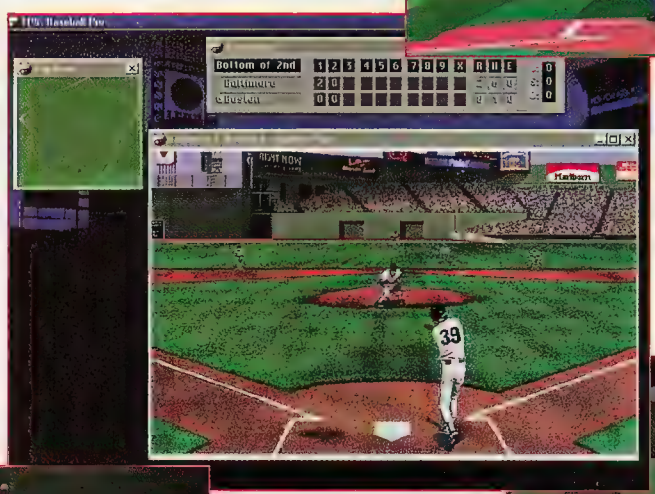
The other feature that remains is the physics and 3D modeling which take place when the pitch is thrown and the bat is swung. Basically, wind is modeled and when contact is made, the game determines where on the bat contact was made and determines where the ball will go in the field of play (or not). This eliminates much of the repetition seen in previous baseball simulations, as they often use pre-programmed flight paths for the balls.

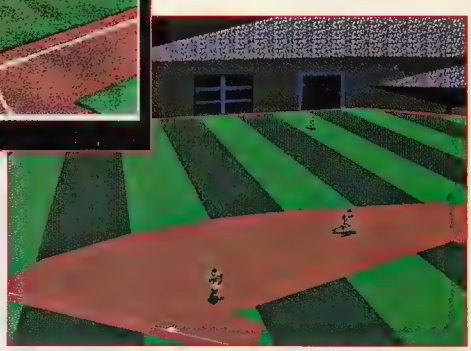
Some of the most obvious problems have been addressed. The infamous problem with fastball pitchers getting ripped has been fixed (and it had better be – the box cover features the amazing Randy Johnson). Overall, the player ratings have been made a bit easier to understand (they're all on the same scale, whereas previously some higher numbers meant good things or bad things, depending on the rating).

The batter-pitcher interface and 3D stadium view are more seamlessly integrated than before (though how it works on a slower machine remains to be seen – it was an instantaneous switch on the machines at Dynamix). The CAMS system is still around, allowing the gamer to view the game from any conceivable angle (though why they'd want to do this remains a mystery).

The only thing that could go against the game is the delay since the first version. Since there hasn't been a new version in two years, will gamers expect a totally new game, rather than a refinement of the original?







Time will tell, but if the game works like the first one should have worked, it will be irrelevant, because it will have come as close as any game ever has to bridging the gap between graphic and text-only simulations. ■

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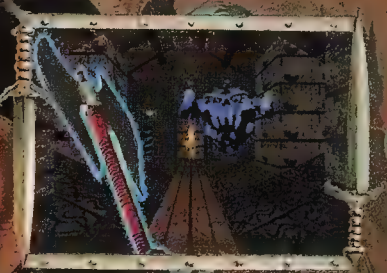

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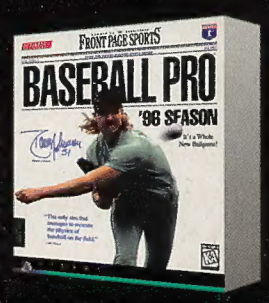
OR YOU CAN SEND HIM IN TO
PITCH RELIEF IN THE BOTTOM OF THE NINTH.

No matter how you slice and dice the lineup, when you play *Front Page Sports: Baseball Pro '96* you'll be playing the Big Unit of baseball sims. It's the only game that relies on more than stats to put the ball in play. It also goes deep to take a look at wind, humidity, ball spin, and bat speed on every single swing. Graphics hit a dinger too, with ultra-realistic motion-captured 3D animation, and camera controls that let you watch from anywhere in all 28 big league ballparks. Then there's the section where you can slip into the body of any active major leaguer and show your stuff at pitching, hitting, and fielding. The coolest thing, though, is that you get to make managerial decisions that are highly questionable. Or, possibly, pure genius.



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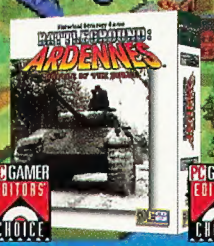

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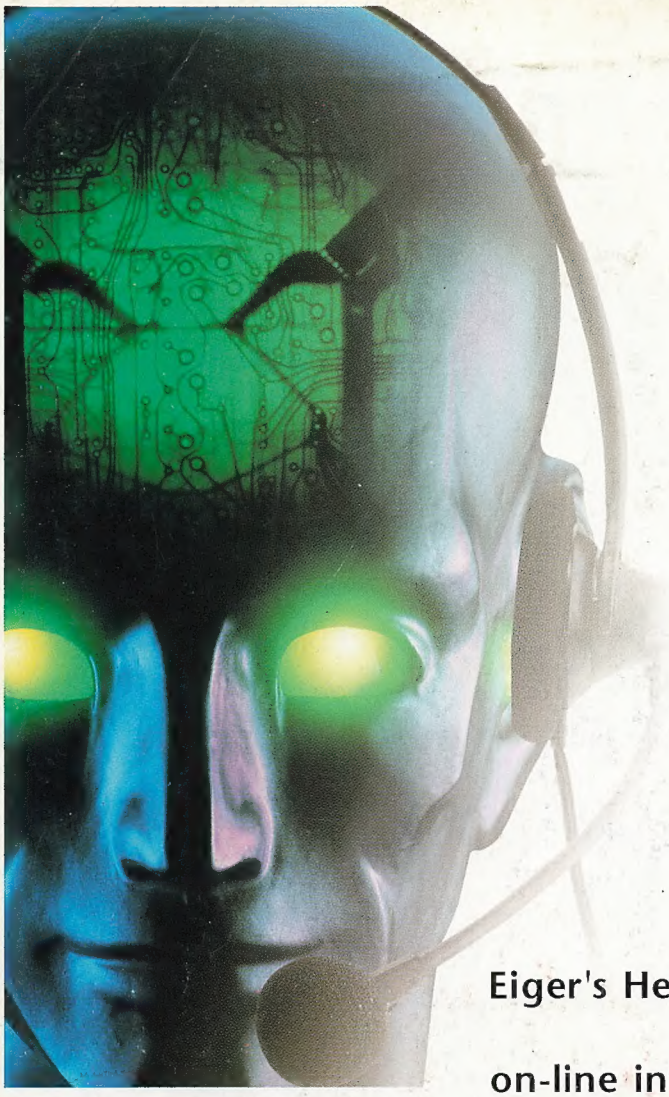

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